

Romans

Bible Commentary 2021

by

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The Power of God For Salvation – Chapter 1

1:1

This greeting contained Paul's description of who he was and his work. Paul described himself as an apostle separated to the gospel of God.

The gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. He accomplished this through his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)

Paul was not ashamed of the gospel. It is good news to everyone who believes the message. This good news contains the promise that everyone who believes upon the Lord Jesus Christ receives eternal life.

In order to proclaim this message Paul's life was separated from everything else. He was consecrated to accomplish this one task. He could not do anything he wanted to do, but he would fulfill the calling the Lord Jesus gave him. He was no longer free to follow himself, but was instead a servant of Jesus Christ.

There are only two choices in life. Either we are a slave to self and sin, or we are a slave to the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no in-between ground. There is only light and darkness. There is only Christ or the enemy of God. We must make our choice. If we make no choice, then the choice is made for us, and the default choice is that we are slaves to self and sin.

Let us instead choose that we will serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Renounce all idols, beliefs, philosophies, or religions which contradict the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:2

God promised the gospel before time began. In the Bible the Lord promised the gospel. Where do we find the gospel in the Old Testament? The heart of the gospel is receiving eternal life by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Where do we find resurrection and eternal life mentioned in the Old Testament? Read Job 19:25-26. The Old Testament pointed to the suffering of the Messiah on behalf of the world. John the Baptist proclaimed that Jesus was the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world. Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 point to the suffering of the Lord Jesus.

1:3

It was known by many that Messiah was the Son of David. Jesus was called the Son of David by common people. The religious leaders rebuked him when he allowed people to call him the Son of David. Mark 10:46-47 is an example of when a blind man called Jesus the Son of David. In Matthew 21:15-16 the religious leaders were angry with Jesus when he let people call him the Son of David. Also, read Matthew 22:41-46.

Jesus is the Son of David. He is the Son of Man. He is the Son of God. This is what the religious leaders could not accept. They refused to believe this man who stood in front of them was the Son of God. If they accepted Jesus they would have to renounce their position. They would not do this because they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. They loved power more than they loved the truth who stood in front of them. The same is true today.

1:4

How do I know Jesus is the Son of God? Jesus Christ was raised from the dead on the third day. God declared Jesus is the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead. This is the heart of the gospel. Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

Jesus is the Son of God and He is also God the Son. He is one of the three persons of the one God. God is three in one: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One God in three persons.

We see in John's gospel that Jesus was called the Word of God and that he lived with God and is God. Read John 1:1-5 and 1 John 1:1-3.

In the beginning of the Lord's earthly ministry the devil tempted Jesus in respect to being the Son of God. He repeatedly called into question who Jesus was and tempted Jesus to prove he was the Son of God. Read Matthew 4:3, 6. When the Lord exposed demons they would call him Son of God. Read Matthew 8:29. When Jesus was on the cross the religious leaders attacked him in regard to Jesus being the Son of God. Read Matthew 27:40, 43. These scriptures reveal that the devil attacks the teaching that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Walter Martin was a preacher who wrote the book "Kingdom of the Cults". One thing he said in his writing was that all the cults have one common characteristic. All the cults deny that Jesus Christ is God the Son. They deny that Jesus is God who came in the flesh.

This was what John also taught us. Read 1 John 4:2-3; 2 John 1:7.

Jesus is the Son of David. Jesus is the Son of Man. Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is God the Son. Jesus Christ is God.

1:5

Paul did not say that he was the only one who received grace and apostleship, but instead "we" have received grace and apostleship. There is a sense in scripture that there were twelve apostles of the Lord Jesus. Those original twelve he chose and then also there was Matthias chosen by lot and also Paul. We also see Paul listed apostles in a list of gifts provided to the church. Read Ephesians 4:11-12.

There are men today who fulfill the gift of apostle. I don't mean they have authority to write a new Bible or add to the Bible. However, they are apostles for edifying the church. These gifts exist for the perfecting of the saints and the edification of the body of Christ.

Why would we not have these gifts? Do we have evangelists? Do we have pastors? Do we have teachers? Then why would we not have apostles and prophets as well?

Notice Paul mentioned all nations. Paul was primarily an apostle to the Gentiles. His gospel went to the whole world of unbelievers, and not just to the Jewish people. The gospel went first to the Jew, but it was also for the Gentile.

The church is Jews and Gentiles combined into a new body of believers. The message of the gospel is for all nations. Read Colossians 3:11; Ephesians 3:3-6.

Why did Paul preach the gospel to all nations? It was for the name of Jesus Christ. For his name. It was not for the promotion of Paul's name, but was for the name of Jesus Christ. It is the goal of the Christian to make the name of Jesus Christ great and glorious.

1:6

The Christians in Rome were called by the Lord Jesus Christ. From every nation the Lord called those who were his. We see in the future kingdom there will be saints from every nation. (Revelation 5:9)

Our primary identity is in Christ. It is not country, culture, society, language, or skin color. Our identity is in Christ Jesus. In Christ all these barriers were done away. We are one people in Christ Jesus. Read Ephesians 2:13-19.

The devil causes men to hate one another based on secondary issues such as race, color, language, culture, and society. It is Satan who causes people to rise against one another, to kill one another, and to overthrow one another. This violence is the work of Satan. Jesus exposed the work of the devil. Read John 10:10. The thief Jesus pointed to was the devil. The devil is a thief, a murderer, and a destroyer.

A Christian does not want any part in this. This world system is not our home. Our purpose is to proclaim the gospel to as many as will hear. Be faithful to hold fast the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation.

1:7

This church in Rome was not founded by the apostles Paul or Peter. It was a church which appeared spontaneously and perhaps began on the day of Pentecost when men from Rome were in Jerusalem.

It did not matter to Paul that he did not start this church. They were beloved of God and called saints. Notice the "to be" before the word "saints" is inserted by the translators, and is not necessary to the meaning. Saints are not super spiritual Christians performing miraculous feats or extraordinary acts. Instead, ordinary Christians are saints and beloved of God.

Paul extended the blessing of grace and peace to these Christians. This was a greeting which was both Gentile and Jewish and appropriate for the church. The church is both Gentile and Jew combined into one new man.

The gospel is a message of peace. Paul taught in Ephesians chapter 6 to put on the feet the gospel of peace. The Lord gives peace to his people. Read Psalm 29:11.

Paul taught the Lord will give us peace which passes understanding. Have you ever felt a deep peace in the midst of circumstances where everything seemed like it was falling apart? I have experienced this and I knew it was the peace Paul described. Read Philippians 4:7.

1:8

Paul gave thanks for the church. He gave thanks to God through Jesus Christ for them. The faith of the church in Rome was spoken of throughout the whole world.

When he wrote this letter Paul had not yet visited them but it was his goal. He heard of their faith, and he knew everyone heard about the faith of the Christians in Rome. Were these extraordinary Christians? What was it that made them so unique and different that their faith was spoken of throughout the world?

What is the faith of true Christians? The Christian faith is simple. We believe God sent his Son into this world to be the Savior of the world. Jesus died on the cross and shed his blood for the forgiveness of sins. He died, was buried, and on the third day rose from the dead. He arose from the dead. This is the faith of Christians and it was talked about throughout the whole world.

The gospel is the power of God for salvation. Jesus said it began in Jerusalem, would spread to Judaea, and Samaria, and to the end of the world. This was exactly what happened.

Remember to give thanks for brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world. Allow the Holy Spirit to fill you with love for everyone who confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord. We give thanks for everyone who believes in Jesus, and pray that our faith be spoken of in the whole world.

1:9

There is a pattern in Paul's letters of praying for churches, giving thanks for them, and interceding for them. This is the work of every Christian: to pray for the church, and to give thanks for each one. This is a work we are called to continue and never stop. We should always have an attitude of prayer and intercession for the church.

Here are some examples of Paul exhorting us to pray: 1 Thessalonians 1:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:17. He told the Thessalonians he prayed for them, and also commanded them to pray without ceasing.

This means we never stop praying on a daily basis for the church. It does not mean we pray twenty four hours a day, but that when we pray we remember the church in our prayers. Paul went more in-depth on exactly what he prayed for the church in other letters. In each example there was always the principle of thanksgiving in prayer.

Some examples of Paul's prayers: Ephesians 1:15-23; Ephesians 3:14-21; Philippians 1:3-11; Philippians 4:6-7; Colossians 1:3-4; Colossians 1:9-14; Colossians 4:2-3

1:10

In the book of Acts we see Paul made it to Rome. The Lord provided him with transportation on a Roman slave ship as a prisoner in chains. Paul described his prayer request to God as a "prosperous journey by the will of God". I believe the Lord answered this prayer.

Today we have a different idea of what prosperous means. From the viewpoint of eternity Paul had a prosperous journey to Rome. He was shipwrecked on an island and had opportunity to preach the gospel to the inhabitants of the island. People were brought to the Lord Jesus Christ through the ministry of Paul. Even the Romans who guarded Paul were impacted by his life, testimony, and message of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul did have a prosperous journey by the will of God when he traveled to Rome. Most people today would not consider being a prisoner on a slave ship a prosperous journey but from the perspective of eternity it was a prosperous journey. The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ was preached to those who never heard the message. People were brought to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We should ask the Lord to help us redefine what we think of words like "prosperous" or "prosperity". Do we immediately think of money? If we do then we are brainwashed by the world system.

The Lord answers prayers especially when it pertains to preaching the gospel. However, when he answers prayers it may come in a way which is unexpected. Remember to give thanks when the Lord answers prayers and acknowledge answered prayers.

1:11

A spiritual gift was meant to establish believers in their faith. This means to be settled, grounded, and confident in their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. To be established in faith in Jesus means we no longer waver. We are not moved by the unbelief of people around us.

Paul covered spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12-14. The greatest gift built up the church. Prophesying is the greatest gift because it builds, edifies, and establishes believers. Read 1 Corinthians 14:3. This is what prophesying should do. A prophet will have a heart to edify, exhort, and comfort God's people.

Keep in mind the goal of spiritual gifts. The goal is for establishing believers in their faith. Knowing this prevents using a spiritual gift inappropriately. Our purpose should never be to make a name for ourselves, but to make the name of Jesus Christ great and glorious.

Let us be established in the faith and learn the proper use of spiritual gifts: edify, exhort, and comfort the church.

1:12

Paul looked forward to being encouraged by their faith as much as he looked forward to imparting to them a spiritual gift. No matter what our work is in the church we continue to need others. We are all members of one another and need the faith of others to help us in our faith. (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)

Each Christian needs to encourage others but also needs to receive from others. In this way each one is encouraged by the other person's faith. Jesus said where two or three are gathered in his name he is there with them. (Matthew 18:20) Christians work together to fulfill God's purpose and goal. Christians rarely serve alone but usually with at least two or three others.

We see this pattern when Jesus sent his disciples in pairs. We see this pattern in the ministry of Paul. We see this in Paul's letters when he often mentioned those working with him. He mentioned their names in the greetings of his letters.

We will go through seasons when we are alone. Sometimes a Christian goes through seasons when he is alone. A man of God certainly will face times of loneliness where God is dealing with him. Yet the Christian always longs for fellowship where he can be encouraged by the mutual faith of his brothers and sisters in Christ.

1:13

Paul was confident his message would produce good results in the Roman Christians. He planned many times to travel to Rome but was hindered. He knew if he could reach them his ministry would produce results in the same way the gospel impacted other Gentiles.

Confidence in the gospel for any preacher cannot be understated. We should memorize the gospel and repeat it to ourselves every day. If we are not completely infused with the message then as we encounter human need and suffering we will be tempted to turn aside to man-centered methods or tools in dealing with challenges.

There is only one God ordained method for dealing with man's problems: the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Man has one problem and this is sin. The sin problem is the root of all suffering in life. We are separated from God who provides for us and protects us. As a result, those who do not believe the gospel of Jesus Christ are doomed to provide and protect for themselves.

This work of providing for self and protecting self results in worship of self. We worship what is created more than the creator, and the final result is God's curse of death, destruction, and wrath.

Paul is confident that the message of Jesus Christ will result in the fruit of the Spirit in their lives. It will produce the fruit of eternal life. Here are more scriptures where Paul uses the "fruit" metaphor: Romans 7:4-5, Romans 6:22, Galatians 5:22-23.

Though Paul did not plant this church in Rome he planned to water it and therefore participate in their joy. This points back to Christians mutually benefiting from one another's faith in Christ.

1:14

Paul was not in debt to anyone in the sense that he owed money. Instead, the idea of a Christian debtor was what Paul mentioned later in Romans 13:8, "*Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.*" The Christian owes a debt of love to every man because of the great love God has shown to us.

Paul was a debtor to Gentiles because he was ordained by the Lord Jesus Christ as an apostle to them. Read Romans 11:13, Acts 9:15-16.

In those days anyone who did not speak the Greek language was considered a barbarian. Paul said he was a debtor to everyone who spoke Greek, but also to every nation that did not speak the Greek language. Paul understood the gospel was a universal message for every nation, language, tongue, and people. Not only was this message for those considered wise in the world system, but it was also a message for those who were unwise. We see Paul put this into practice when he preached the gospel to a runaway slave in the letter to Philemon. Paul preached to kings and to runaway slaves. He was a debtor to every man to preach the gospel.

How does this apply to the Christian today? We are debtors because of God's love shown toward us. As we received freely from God we should freely give to others. We should proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ free of charge and make known his word in all nations.

The Lord Jesus gave the church the great commission. Read Matthew 28:18-20. We are ambassadors for Christ, compelled by the love of Christ, to preach the message of God's reconciliation through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1:15

I have heard preachers who said they did not prepare sermons but just stood up and relied on the Holy Spirit to give them words. They base this idea on the bible verse where Jesus said not to think ahead of time how to answer someone but rely upon the Father to provide words. Read Matthew 10:19-20. In the context, however, what Jesus described was Christian persecution. Christians were arrested and brought before secular judges or kings. Jesus taught his followers not to worry how they would defend themselves. Father God gave them what to say at that moment. In other words, we can count on the Holy Spirit to give us supernatural wisdom in extraordinary circumstances. I do not think this means men called to preach God's word should not prepare themselves through Bible study.

This is not the way we are taught by Paul or the Lord Jesus. Not only Paul, but also Peter taught us to always prepare to give an answer to anyone who asks about the hope we have. (1 Peter 3:15) Paul also exhorted Timothy in this regard. Read 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

1:16

Christians today have difficulty remembering the gospel. Their minds are filled with news about sodomites, murderers, and lying politicians. This is not what we need to fill our mind with. Put away the news and get into God's Word! Remember Psalm 1. Meditate upon the word day and night.

Everything in the world system is designed to make a Christian ashamed of the gospel of Christ. The world system is against God and against His Son Jesus Christ. We need to understand this, and make the decision that if we die proclaiming the truth the last words on our lips will be "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ".

If a Christian does not understand anything else in the Bible he needs to have the gospel of Christ deeply embedded in his heart and mind.

We need to wake up in the morning and remind ourselves: "Jesus died on the cross for my sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day". We need to remember God the Father placed us into Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:30) and united us together with Christ in crucifixion (Galatians 2:20), death (Romans 6:3), burial, (Romans 6:4), and resurrection (Romans 6:5, Ephesians 2:5-6).

Paul outlined the gospel message for us. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, "*Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*"

The gospel is the good news that we are saved and receive eternal life through faith in what Jesus Christ did for us.

Romans 10:9-13, "*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*"

Let us never forget the gospel. Do not be ashamed of the gospel but be prepared to participate in the suffering which comes from sharing the truth with people. Read 2 Timothy 1:7-8.

It is the greatest privilege a man could ever have to be entrusted with the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a great honor if the occasion arises that we suffer for sharing the gospel. Read Acts 5:41-42. If anyone suffers for sharing the gospel they receive a reward when they enter the kingdom of God. Read Luke 6:22-23.

Let us not waver, be afraid, or be ashamed of the good news. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes!

1:17

Paul also quoted this scripture in Galatians and in Hebrews. Read Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38. This quote is taken from Habakkuk 2:2-4.

The phrase "*the just shall live by faith*" ties together Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews in presenting the gospel of grace and peace. Salvation is by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is a gift of God. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

There are religious movements which attempt to drag Christians back into bondage to Old Testament law, commandments, and ordinances. The overcoming remnant of God's people hold tightly to the gospel of justification by faith.

We are not saved by law. We are not sanctified or glorified by God's law. The purpose of God's law was to shut the mouth of the sinner who attempted to defend himself against God's wrath by doing good works. (Romans 3:19) Try getting a human judge to wave your crime because you did good works. He is not interested in your good works. The human judge will convict you because of your crime, even if you have done many good works. In a similar way, you cannot justify yourself before God by your good works. Salvation is by faith in Christ.

Salvation is complete. From justification, sanctification, and glorification it is by faith in God's promise and God's gift in Jesus Christ. Every aspect of redemption, justification, sanctification, and glorification is God's work which he accomplished through His Son Jesus Christ.

Justification by faith is developed in the book of Romans. It was proclaimed also in the book of Galatians, and held forth to Jewish Christians in the book of Hebrews.

This gospel of grace and peace is the only hope of salvation. The gospel is entirely the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes.

How do I apply this to my life? Make up your mind to firmly reject the teachings and doctrines of any man, church, movement, or organization which attempts to mix in the Jewish law in the Old Testament with the gospel of grace given to the apostles, especially the gospel we read Paul preaching in Romans and in his letters.

The just shall live by faith. We are saved by faith. We grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ by faith. We receive entrance into God's Kingdom, not because of works which we have done (2 Timothy 1:9), but completely because we believed upon God's Son Jesus Christ. There is no other way to enter heaven or to please God. Read Hebrews 11:6.

1:18

Whether or not men will acknowledge it everyone knows about the wrath of God. Everyone knows in the deepest part of the conscience that God's wrath is against our ungodliness and unrighteousness. Some are successful in hardening their conscience so that they no longer feel this wrath of God, but God puts this knowledge in every person.

When we defend ourselves when corrected we give evidence of our knowledge. In some people the sense of God's wrath is highly developed even as children.

Some children when faced with the prospect of going to the Principal's office in school will experience a dread in their hearts. It makes them sweat and have an uneasy feeling in the pit of the stomach. If you

have ever stood before a judge or before another man who has authority to enforce or execute judgment in your life then you have experienced a taste of God's wrath. These experiences are a mild taste of the wrath of God.

A normal person is accused by their conscience when they disobey the law of God written upon their heart. They know they deserve punishment and wrath. This wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

Men hold the truth in unrighteousness. When I meditated on this I was reminded of how the devil quoted the word of God to Jesus when he tempted the Lord in the wilderness. He had God's word in his mouth. But the truth in the devil's mouth became a lie. He held the truth in unrighteousness. He used truth to further his campaign of deception. This is what men do. They use truth to weave lies and deception and delusions.

Men delude themselves and use God's word to accomplish this. It is the most dangerous spiritual deception I've seen. I sometimes read comments on YouTube after I watch a video sermon. It is amazing to see how people can take God's word and completely twist the meaning of what the speaker said and what God's word says.

Peter mentions this phenomena as well. Read 2 Peter 3:15-16.

Men twist scriptures to their own destruction. Men deceive themselves by taking God's word to justify themselves and their sin.

James also pointed to deception which people get into by being hearers of God's word but not doers of God's word. Read James 1:21-22.

God's wrath is on people who live in their sins, who do not repent, and who refuse to believe and submit to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The wrath of God abides upon them.

Men are objects of God's wrath by nature. (Ephesians 2:3) Salvation is escaping from God's wrath. There is only one way for us to escape the wrath of God. This way is Jesus Christ. He is the way, the truth, and the life. (John 14:6) We can receive forgiveness of our sins by putting our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

1:19

"Manifest" means plain, open, clearly visible to the eye or obvious to the understanding; apparent; not obscure or difficult to be seen or understood.

What can be known of God is clearly visible to men. Man is made in the image of God. It is one thing for men to deny the Bible, but it is quite another thing to deny the truth which is clearly visible to the eye and obvious to the understanding. God designed man and also the world around us. The entire creation testifies of the design of the Creator. Read Genesis 1:26-27, Genesis 2:7, 18, 21-24. These verses from Genesis teach us that man is made in the image of God. God created man and then he created a woman out of man. God made mankind: male and female God created them.

When men reject the truth of God they reject the obvious truth of God's design in how man is made. God made them male and female. When men deny this truth they have gone beyond denying the Bible. They deny the obvious truth in creation itself.

God showed us who he is through creation. God revealed himself through man who is made in the image of God.

When Satan is able to deceive mankind to the point where men deny the obvious truth of creation then man crosses a deadly line in the sand.

When men are so deceived that they can no longer acknowledge the truth then there is no longer any hope for men. It is at this point fire fell out of the sky upon Sodom. It is at this point a flood came to destroy the earth.

There is no doubt in my mind we are living right now in the day which Jesus described before his second return to earth. Read Luke 17:26-30.

1:20

Years ago a friend and I visited a county jailhouse weekly to share gospel tracts, pamphlets, and pray for those who joined us. Sometimes the prisoners asked questions I could not answer. I kept the questions in mind and researched in the Bible. One question asked was how could God send the savage to hell if he never heard the gospel.

I did not have an answer at the time. Eventually the Lord showed me here in Romans chapter 1 the answer. Read Romans 1:20. No man has any excuse. No one will be able to stand before God on judgment day and say they did not know God. Men try to deny God's existence, but even the atheist knows God exists. Why devote one's life to denying the existence of someone unless you actually do believe he exists? This shows the folly of atheists. (Psalm 14:1)

The character of God and who he is can be seen by creation around us. Those who pretend they cannot see this are lying. They chose the lie of the devil over the truth of God. However, though men may deny God they still won't have an excuse on judgment day. God holds us accountable. Men are without excuse.

I'm confident if any man wants to know God then God will reveal himself to that man. God can speak to that man. God can reveal his son Jesus Christ to that man. This does not diminish the responsibility of Christians to carry the gospel to every nation.

An example of this was when an angel appeared to the Roman centurion and told him to call for Peter. (Acts 10)

This was a Gentile who believed in God but did not know the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Lord intervened for him so he could hear the gospel from the apostle Peter. This is a good example of my point that if a man wants to know God then he can know God. God will reveal himself to a man who sincerely seeks for him.

1:21

God gave mankind the ability to turn away from him. This is called free will. When men do not acknowledge God or glorify God, or thank him for what he provides, then a process begins. Failing to glorify God and not thanking God causes a process of erosion. This process does not stand still. Our hearts fill with unbelief and our minds are molded by the ideas of the world system.

The world system exalts itself against the knowledge of God. When we fail to glorify God or thank him then our minds become as vain as the world system. Our minds become fixated on the temporary, transient things the world system produces and offers.

We become vain in our imaginations. Our minds are devoted to making money and believing self-centered philosophies and ideas. We eventually get to the place where we think the entire world revolves around us and our needs or desires.

When a man gets to that point his foolish heart is truly darkened. Notice whenever the Bible uses the word "fool" or "foolish" it is in connection to unbelief and living for self.

Paul repeats this principle again in Ephesians. Read Ephesians 4:17-19.

The unbelieving mind is filled with vanity. The understanding is framed by the darkness of the world system. They are separated from God through ignorance which is the result of a blind heart. Progressively they lose the ability to feel conviction of their true condition and so give themselves more and more to immorality.

They knew God at one time. Every man knew God, but by our choice to live for self we are separated from the knowledge of God. This separation produces an increasingly vain framework of thoughts. It erects thoughts which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. It hardens the heart. A hard heart is in the breast of a person who loves self, provides for self first, and protects self. Their prize is self. They defend themselves at any cost, even when there is no threat. The way of the transgressor is truly a hard way to live.

It is not too late to repent, to give up excuses, and confess our sins to God. Forsake all other religions, philosophies, and opinions, and put your entire trust and faith in Jesus Christ alone. Read Isaiah 55:6-9.

Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins. He gave his life at Calvary so we could be forgiven and receive eternal life. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. There is no other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved. (John 14:6; Acts 4:12) Never forget to acknowledge God in all our ways, and give thanks in everything. (Proverbs 3:5-6; 1 Thessalonians 5:18)

1:22

Those who do not acknowledge God nor thank God are filled with an evil heart of unbelief. They turn away from the living God to their opinions, philosophies, psychology, or religious systems. The more they dwell on false ideas of science, religion, and philosophy the more wise they believe they are. They think they are growing in knowledge but are really becoming more foolish. They become fools while thinking they are smart. They are fools because they esteem what their own minds create over the

established reality of who God is and the world God created around them. This is not the only place where the Bible calls unbelievers "fools". Read Psalm 14:1.

There were times when I debated unbelievers. I tried to reason with them. I would not say it is completely useless but remember the instruction in proverbs to stay away from foolish people. Read Proverbs 14:7. Also, the Lord Jesus exhorted us not to cast our pearls before swine. (Matthew 7:6).

It takes wisdom from the Holy Spirit to know when you are dealing with a mocker. They draw you in with questions which on the surface seem legitimate. However, they do exactly what the religious leaders did to Jesus. They use questions to trap a man in a snare.

Remember, someone who does not believe in God believes in lies. This person does not have a grasp on the meaning of language because they use words to lie. You cannot reason with someone like this. Everything you say is turned upside down. They change the meaning of words to conform to their self-centered world view.

After years of evangelism I came to the realization that apologetics is mostly fruitless. At least I've never had much success with this approach. The servant of the Lord is not called to strive with men about words. Instead, we are called to proclaim the truth. Why allow the unbeliever to set the framework of the "conversation" using lies such as evolution, science, false world history? Instead, it is our job to proclaim the gospel. Our job is not to argue. Our job is to preach and teach.

Follow the Holy Spirit in this work. Sometimes you may find an honest seeker who sincerely asks questions which he heard mockers ask. However, in his mind he is seeking. In this case it is fine to use apologetics to help him believe because he wants to believe. He needs help believing and overcoming doubts.

We are not called to argue with mockers. The servant of the Lord must not strive. (2 Timothy 2:24) From what I've seen it is Christians who esteem intelligence highly who are attracted to religious debates using science, logic, or what they call apologetics. I think Christians should humble their heart and use simple words to share with others the gospel message. Lace your conversation with verses straight out of the Bible. The word of God has power to convict the conscience. Logic can only go so far but the real work is bearing down on the conscience with the word of God.

I've found when I get angry at someone I am sharing the gospel with it is usually because the person is a mocker. Go from the presence of the foolish man. Don't cast your pearls before swine. The evil spirits working through them enjoy mocking you. You cannot reason with someone who is demon possessed. There are a lot more people demon possessed than what we realize (Ephesians 2:2)

May the Lord give us wisdom as we endeavor to win souls for Christ and avoid mockers.

1:23

What is the root cause of religions which bow down to idols, totem poles, statues, and icons? They knew God but they did not acknowledge him as God and were unthankful. As a result their worship descended to the lowest denominator.

Why would man want to worship birds, beasts, and creeping things? For the same reason society in America exalts sodomy. They glory in their shame. They exalt the lowest things so they can feel benevolent and superior. They feel moral by elevating the acceptance of sodomy to a virtue. They have changed the image of the incorruptible God into an image like corruptible man. Man becomes a worshiper of himself.

Instead of looking to God they look inward to their own heart. The result is bizarre religions, philosophies, systems, programs, ordinances, confessions. Have you ever been in a group who sat around and confessed they were an addict and an alcoholic? Then you have seen up close what this verse talks about. They exchange the glory of God into something which is corrupt. They glory in their shame and define their life by their sin. This is false religion.

What do people do in church? They gather and agree upon a confession. In church that confession is "Jesus is Lord", but in these so-called secular self-help meetings the confession is always about self. They call their confession being honest with themselves and with others but they are liars. The entire system they join is a lie and deception. It is just another of Satan's systems put in place to separate people from the living God in Jesus Christ.

Today instead of bowing down to idols or animals men bow to themselves. He glorifies self and talks about how much he loves himself. They are lovers of self, boasters, proud, and blasphemers. Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5. These verses describe American culture today, especially the society which sprang out of technology. Everyone is glued to technology and rapidly conforms to the pattern of the world system. Propaganda moves at breakneck speed and controls the minds of masses. It moves people around like puppets on a string.

Christians should pray, get into the word of God, and ask for revelation from God to see through the deceptions around us. Remember the instructions in Romans 12:2 and Ephesians 4:23.

1:24

God executes judgment, not by lightning or thunder or earthquakes, but simply by removing his common grace from people who hate him. The sinner does not realize his life is in God's hand. The only thing which enables men to retain their humanity is the grace of God. When men do not acknowledge God and do not thank God but instead bow down to the creation of their own hands and minds then God removes his common grace. Men can have what they want.

Man looks inward but what he finds within is darkness. It is a bottomless abyss of darkness inside of men's hearts. Without God's grace men are consumed by darkness. This darkness fills the soul, the mind, the will, and the emotions. When men no longer conform to God then they are conformed to the image of darkness. This darkness inside of men totally corrupts the mind and leads him to live like an animal.

Part of acting like an animal is sexual degradation. Men glory in shame and define themselves through sin and rebellion against the Creator. When man reaches this point he is actively conforming himself to the devil.

It is Satan's plan to remove any resemblance of the image of God in man. God created man in his own image. When men dishonor their bodies between themselves they destroy the image of God they were created with. They completely separate themselves from the life of God and embrace death itself.

When men are ruled by lust society crumbles. Dictators rise to control the population because men can no longer be trusted to control themselves. The less men control themselves within the more they must be controlled from without.

It is a terrifying judgment when God turns his back on men. The only hope men have of maintaining their humanity is the grace of God. Without this grace men become devils. There is hardly a more terrifying phrase than this: "*God also gave them up*".

1:25

The enemy is a counterfeiter. He takes the truth and turns it into a lie.

This is what happened when Eve believed the Serpent instead of God. When Eve believed the Serpent she called God a liar. A man cannot hold the truth and the lie at the same time. Since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden by default men change the truth of God into a lie.

It requires revelation from the Holy Spirit for a man to grasp truth. I pray often for the Lord to give me a love of the truth, that I may walk in the truth, live in the truth, and always speak the truth in love to others. I do not want anything to do with lies, exaggerations, and deceit.

When men change God's truth into a lie they immediately worship the creation more than the Creator. What does this mean? It means man puts himself before God. He worships himself. He loves self more than he loves God. This is one of the signs of the last days that men will be lovers of their own selves. Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

Men are religious while worshiping self and putting self first. This is the core of modern culture and thinking. Men consider themselves superior and evolved beyond Christianity. They believe in their own knowledge and science. They only believe in self now. This is exactly what the Antichrist beast represents. He represents self over God. He does not recognize any god. He boasts that he is God. He comes in his own name and the world will receive him as their own. Because he is.

It grieves me when I'm around people who love themselves, who exalt themselves, and boast of what they have done, do, or will do. It grieves me because I know what spirit works through them. It is not hard to discern the spirit of the devil working through people. Read Ephesians 2:2.

May the Lord open the eyes of the unbeliever that he may see how temporary this life is and understand the consequences of his words, actions, and attitudes. Call upon the Lord while he is near. Seek the Lord while he may be found. Today is the day of salvation.

1:26-32

Sexual perversion is the result when people have a reprobate mind. Those who flaunt their deviant sexuality are turned over to a reprobate mind. What exactly is a reprobate mind?

"Reprobate" means that something or someone is worthless or rejected. If something cannot be used or has no purpose it is reprobate. Reprobate means people become corrupt to the point where their lives are worthless. They no longer bring any glory to God.

The purpose of man is to serve God and worship God and to enjoy God. However, when people define their life by sin and perversion they no longer glorify God. The mind of this person is reprobate. It no longer has any worth. It is rejected.

We know from the Bible that men can become so corrupt they no longer hear God's voice. Their conscience is seared. Their minds are not capable of receiving truth. This is a mind which is reprobate. It is no longer able to grasp truth anymore. These people have lost their humanity.

How can we resist this downward pull of depravity? We agree with God that he is right and we are wrong. I say to God, "You are right, Lord. I am wrong." I trust completely in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. I call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and the salvation of my soul. When we believe on the Lord Jesus we are born again by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will teach, guide, and lead us into the truth of God's word. He works in us to sanctify us and prepare us for eternity.

Salvation includes justification through the finished work of Christ, sanctification by faith in Christ alone, and finally we will be glorified when we are resurrected. We will receive a resurrected body and will live forever with the Lord.

Each day we live give thanks to the Lord. Acknowledge the Lord in all our ways. This will keep us living with the right attitude and keep us far away from the downward pull of self, sin, the world, and the devil.

God's Law In Our Heart – Chapter 2

2:1

The idea Paul developed was that all men are under sin. We are born sinners. From the time we are born human nature is controlled by the power of sin. Every man when he reaches an age when he knows what is right and wrong becomes accountable to God for his actions.

Paul's point was that those who knew God's law and pointed out the sins in other people also condemned themselves. No man kept the law of God except one man, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus completely obeyed and fulfilled the entire law of God.

This moral law was written upon man's conscience. Men have a built in knowledge of good and evil. This inner knowledge is what enables men to look around at the actions of others and determine if what others do is right or wrong. Everyone does this. Not just hypocrites in church. Everyone judges everyone. This is an automatic reaction everyone has. However, when we do this we also condemn ourselves.

The inner knowledge that others do wrong is also the same knowledge which condemns us. God's law absolutely condemns every single person on the planet. We have all broken God's law and committed sin.

We do not have an excuse. We cannot say to God that we did not know when we did something wrong. We knew it when we chose to do what was wrong. We knew it in our heart and in our mind. Our conscience told on us. This is the reason so many people try so hard to stifle their conscience through constant intellectual stimulation. Experiences, entertainment, and constantly being on the go is how we run away from the pain we feel in our conscience.

However, there is another way we deal with our conscience. Instead of running away we can be brave and humble our heart. We can have the courage to confess to God that we know we are wrong, that we have done wrong, that we have lived the wrong way. When we agree with God like this then we can put our faith in Jesus Christ to cleanse us from every sin and from all filthiness of the flesh and mind. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

We will not be able to stand before God on judgment day with the excuse that we did not know any better. If we do that I can only imagine how God would replay back for us every time we pointed out the faults, weaknesses, mistakes, and sins of other people. This is ample evidence that we know better. We do not have excuses before God.

It is much better to humble ourselves now under the mighty hand of God. God gives grace to the humble man. He will forgive us, save us, and deliver us. Every one who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

2:2

God's judgment is according to truth. This means the Lord sees all the facts in every case and judges without partiality. God cannot be moved by bribes or emotional pleas. The only plea which God hears is the cry of a man who calls upon Jesus Christ to forgive him and cleanse him from all unrighteousness.

The judgment of men stands in contrast to the judgment of God. Men often judge others based on their emotions, opinions, or particular bias. Men judge other men according to appearance and are moved by what they see on the surface. Man's judgments are not ever completely based on truth. However, God's judgment is according to truth. Read 1 Corinthians 4:3-5.

We need to recognize fruit in the lives of people in order to protect ourselves from false prophets and teachers. However, there is a sense in that we are not supposed to judge other brothers, because judgment is usually superficial. We can't know all the facts in a brother's life. It is important we do not pull up the wheat along with the tares. Instead, let us trust in God to judge his people. Determine not to put a stumbling block in the way of anyone else. Live a life of love, as Christ loved us, and gave himself for us.

If we can discern spirits and see the intentions of others then let us employ these gifts by edifying, exhorting, and comforting. This means we get involved and come alongside others for their good and not for tearing them down. We should serve others in love, even if we know someone was wrong. A

spiritual brother restores others and does not immediately cast people out of fellowship. There is a time when an unrepentant brother is put out of fellowship but that is only for the purpose of helping him to repent. What happens when he repents?

The Lord judges according to truth. He does not look at us in a superficial manner. He knows our sins. Though he knows we are sinners he died for us on Calvary. God demonstrated his own love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ Jesus died for us.

Instead of judging others let us love others. This does not mean we have no discernment. We need to love people within the context of truth. Mercy triumphs over judgment. Religious people and moralists are often guilty of judging people over superficial things while completely ignoring the fact that they do the same thing.

Only the living God and the power of the Holy Spirit can help us to live a life of love and deliver us from judging others.

Paul's point was that not only were the flaunted sins of pagans worthy of God's wrath but also the religious attitude of superiority was worthy of God's judgment. Everyone was fallen into sin. Read Jeremiah 17:9-10 and Isaiah 64:6.

Instead of defending self and insisting on our own righteousness let us instead humble ourselves and agree with God that we are wrong. We are wrong and God is righteous. Let us turn from our self and put our complete trust and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

2:3

The message Paul taught was that since men were able to point out what was wrong in others then they were culpable of their own moral standard. When men express knowledge of standards which they hold others to they show by this their knowledge of their own sinfulness. Not only were those who flaunted their sins accountable to God but also the moral man who pointed out the error of others. Every person is accountable to God.

When we see clearly the sin in other people we acknowledge men are accountable. Each of us is accountable to God. This means there will be a specific time when we will face a review of our lives. Everyone knows this but men suppress the truth of God's judgment. They attempt to push this out of their minds by using their vain imagination and hardening their heart.

No one will escape God's judgment. The Bible says the eyes of the Lord are everywhere keeping watch on the evil and the good man. Read Proverbs 5:21 and Proverbs 15:3.

God has every right to judge mankind because He made us. When I make something it belongs to me. When God makes something or someone it belongs to him. Not only does God own us because he made us but he also redeemed mankind through the blood which Jesus Christ shed upon the cross of Calvary. He owns us twice over. Yes, God has every right to judge men, and every man will stand before God's judgment.

Every man who humbles himself and puts his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will escape God's judgment of condemnation and death. Jesus took upon himself our condemnation and our death sentence. Through faith in the Lord Jesus we can escape from God's wrath and the sentence of eternal death in the Lake of Fire.

Christians will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. This judgment seat of Christ is not for condemnation but for giving the Christian an inheritance and reward in the kingdom of God.

For more information on judgment, the Lake of Fire, the judgment seat of Christ, rewards, and inheritance read the following bible verses: Revelation 20:11-15, Matthew 12:36, Matthew 12:41, Romans 14:10, 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, 2 Timothy 4:8, Revelation 3:11

Deny self. Take up your cross. Put your entire faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation and eternal life.

2:4

Because God is good he made a way for men to escape from the punishment of sin. Because God is good he offered a door of escape from the consequences of sin. He offered forgiveness for every sin. God is good and is willing to forgive. It is not God's will for any man to perish in his sins. 2 Peter 3:9). God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. (Ezekiel 33:11)

God forgives because of the blood of his Son Jesus Christ who died on a cross. Jesus was buried, and on the third day he rose from the dead.

He is the Son of God (Romans 1:4) and by faith in Jesus we receive forgiveness of sins, deliverance from self, sin, the world, and victory over the devil. (Romans 6; 1 John 5:4-5; 1 John 3:8). We no longer live according to the old man, the flesh, or the carnal nature. We are a new creation in Christ Jesus. Old things are passed away and all things have become new. (2 Corinthian 5:17).

God's goodness leads men to repentance. It is God's goodness when the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin. (John 16:8). When the Holy Spirit speaks to our conscience with painful emotions due to our selfish lifestyle we experience God's goodness.

It is God's goodness when we are made aware of our disobedience and are able to humble ourselves and admit we are wrong. This is the goodness of God if we are able to do this. Many people have lost this ability and now have a reprobate (worthless, rejected) mind. (Romans 1:28; 2 Timothy 3:8; Titus 1:16).

If we belong to the Lord he will not let us continue in sin. The pleasure which comes from sin lasts a short time and leaves one empty on the inside. (Hebrews 11:25).

Man tries to satisfy the spiritual hunger inside by filling his life with idolatry, covetousness, and lusts. It is shallow and empty. It is like someone dying from starvation eating popcorn and cotton candy every day. It is like someone dying of thirst and can only drink alcohol. It only worsens the problem and does not satisfy. Sin only gives an illusion of satisfying the inward hunger and thirst.

The Lord Jesus demonstrated the goodness of God when he led the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well to a saving knowledge of himself. (John 4). He revealed himself to her and promised her that anyone who believed in him would never thirst again. The water this world offers never satisfies our thirst, but the living water which Jesus gives satisfies our need now and for eternity. He is the well of living water. He is the living bread. He is our provision and our provider.

We see the goodness of God in the life of Jesus. The Lord Jesus was moved by compassion and served multitudes of people by driving out demons, healing sickness, feeding people, and preaching to them the good news of the kingdom.

Today God shows us his goodness through millions of printed bibles, preachers, churches, and people around the world who share God's word, the gospel, and God's love in practical helping ministries.

Why would anyone despise the goodness of God? This is the question Paul asked and the question the Holy Spirit is asking.

Why do people despise the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ? This is a gospel which is free for the taking. No money is required to obtain eternal life. (Isaiah 55:1-2). All one has to do is believe the gospel that Jesus Christ died for us, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 10:9-10, 13).

The reason I think people despise the goodness of God is because it is too simple and too easy. Men want to exalt their own name. They want to work and build something they can point at, beat on their chest, and say, "Look at me!" But God commands us not to look at ourselves, but instead to look to him. Read Isaiah 45:22. It is that simple.

2:5

When people turn their back on the goodness of God they are changed. People change when they hear the gospel and turn away from it. How are they changed? When someone experiences God's goodness and turns their back on Him their heart is hardened. Rejecting God's grace turns men's heart hard. Rejecting the Lord hardens a man's heart. If you think about it this makes complete sense.

If someone offered kindness to me and I rejected it then my heart would be hardened. Every time men hear the gospel and turn away from it their heart gets harder. Unbelief takes over a man's character and personality. They are filled with the darkness of unbelief and their heart turns to stone inside of them.

The result of rejecting God's goodness is that men save up wrath against themselves. When men reject God's goodness they store up God's wrath against themselves. This is something which increases over time. It is like putting money in the bank and never making a withdrawal. The longer you put money in the bank and don't spend it the more you store it up. Men store up God's wrath against themselves.

Men assume since they are not immediately punished for their hard heart and willful sin that God does not see what they do. They assume they get away with their sin and unbelief. However, the Bible makes it clear God is longsuffering. He gives men opportunity to repent and put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

A day will arrive when God expresses his wrath. His wrath will be revealed and the righteous judgment of God will fall upon Satan and upon men who turned their back on God's goodness.

God expresses his goodness through his Son Jesus Christ. When men reject Jesus and pursue other religions or philosophies they turn their back on the goodness of God. When men reject the gospel of Jesus Christ they store up wrath against themselves.

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to God except through the Son Jesus Christ. (John 14:6). There is no other name given by whom men are saved. (Acts 4:12). Let us seek the Lord while he may be found and call upon him while he is near. (Isaiah 55:6). Today is the day of salvation. (2 Corinthians 6:2).

2:6

I think Christians can become confused when the Bible describes God judging men according to their works or deeds. The foundation we stand on is salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ Jesus alone. Our justification by faith makes us completely secure in salvation in regard to the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

There is more to the believer's life than forgiveness of sins. The Lord also has rewards and inheritance for believers in his kingdom. This is a topic we need to focus on more often. The Bible teaches us that unbelievers and believers face a judgment of works. This does not mean Christians are justified by works. However, Christians are to walk in good works which God prepared for them. Read Ephesians 2:8-10.

There are at least two judgments for men. I know of a third, also, but I won't get into the other judgment right now. There is the great white throne judgment for unbelievers. At that judgment unbelievers are condemned because their works, no matter how good or sincere, could not earn them salvation or justification before a holy God. (Revelation 20:11-15).

Another judgment is for believers. This is known as the judgment seat of Christ. Read 2 Corinthians 5:10. The judgment seat of Christ is for the purpose of reviewing the life of each individual believer. This judgment is not for deciding whether or not a person is saved or unsaved or whether a person will go to heaven or hell. This judgment is about rewards or a loss of rewards for the Christian. Read 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.

As Christians we are secure in Christ. However, being secure should not make us lazy or careless. Grace does not lead men to sin or live carelessly. God's grace teaches us to live holy lives. (Titus 2:11-13). Grace teaches us to live in view of the eternal kingdom of God and to prepare ourselves.

Let us live in expectancy of the return of the Lord Jesus and be ready always to go out to meet him when he returns.

2:7-11

Here we see that whether or not a man does what is bad or good the Lord deals with him according to his actions. A man who does what is good is rewarded. A man who does what is evil is punished. It does not matter if the man is a Jew or a Gentile. God does not take into consideration what cultural,

social, or language background a man comes from. Each man is addressed by God according to his individual actions.

The Lord knows perfectly how every man lives. He knows the man who professes God with his mouth but inwardly is selfish and hypocritical. He also knows the man who is not pretentious and tries to do good according to his own conscience. The Lord meets every one of these men exactly where they are.

The point Paul was driving at here was that God does not show favoritism to one group of people over another but instead addresses each man as an individual and in accordance to how that individual man lives. What matters to God is not what family a man comes from but how does the man live.

A life of right behavior flows from simple faith in God. A life of evil flows from a man who worships self. A man who puts himself or things before God is an idolater, and out of his life flows the river of idolatry. Galatians 5:19-21 lists the fruits of a self-centered life. Paul causes this lifestyle "walking in the flesh".

A man who walks in the Spirit has much different fruit. Read Galatians 5:22-23.

The Lord does not show favoritism. Men almost always show favoritism toward certain kind of people. They judge men by their speech or their appearance. However, God deals with a man according to what is in the heart and by the actions the man's heart produces.

We should always strive to stay away from attitudes of favoritism, racism, prejudice, and nepotism. All these attitudes go together and when we practice these attitudes in word or action it causes us to go further away from the Lord Jesus.

There is no place in the Christian life for favoritism, respect of person, partiality, racism, prejudice or nepotism. Let us recognize these things, humble ourselves, and repent of these attitudes. Do not let these things become a part of who you are.

2:12-16

The Bible teaches that whether or not a man has a Bible he is still accountable to God. How is man accountable to God if he never read the Bible or heard the gospel? He is accountable because God writes the law upon every man's conscience. God put the law into the heart of every man. The conscience accuses or excuses us.

Knowing the law of God in the Bible does not make a man more spiritual than the man who does not know the Bible. Knowing the Bible does not make us any different from a man who does not know the Bible. God does not judge according to what we know but judges every man according to his actions.

A man who does not have a Bible is judged according to what he knows in his conscience. However, a man who does have the Bible is judged according to what he knows from the Bible and his conscience.

Paul's argument was that it does not matter if a man was religious or not. The outward display of religion, church, or carrying a Bible will not matter in the day of judgment.

Those who die without knowing the Bible perish. Those who have a Bible but live in disobedience also perish. There is no difference. Having knowledge of God's law does not make a man better than one who does not have a Bible. All men perish no matter where they come from, what they think they know, or how religious they are.

We should pay attention to "in the day when God shall judge". There is a day appointed in the which God will judge men by Jesus Christ. Read Acts 17:30-31.

The standard of perfection is the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the express image of the invisible God. No one born matches the perfection of the Son of God. Since we are unable to match his perfection we automatically receive the sentence of condemnation.

This is why it is so important to understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is important to understand Jesus paid the price on the cross. Jesus died so we would not have to die and be condemned. Eternal condemnation is eternal punishment in a lake of fire. We cannot conceive of an eternity separated from the God who created us. The horror of this is unimaginable.

God makes salvation simple. All he wants is for us to believe and trust in his Son Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ redeems us from our sins through his death, burial, and resurrection. God placed us into Christ Jesus and rescued us. All we need to do is respond to God with faith and trust in his word.

Let us humble ourselves and confess that we are wrong and that God is right. Let us agree with God. The only way we can be saved is through his Son Jesus Christ.

2:17-29

This scripture speaks to the Jew, but also speaks to the religious church member today. Paul asked the religious Jew to examine himself and how he lived. The religious Jew considered himself to be a teacher to others on how to please God by obeying God's law. However, Paul asked the religious Jew if he really kept God's law. When we teach others not to steal do we rob? When we teach others not to commit adultery, do we lust with our eyes? When we tell others to respect the Bible, the church, and God do we turn around and dishonor God by the way we live? Are we selfish? Do we live for ourselves first or for God? Truly?

Paul concluded that the outward religious observance was vain. The Jews did not understand the true spiritual intent of God's law. God's law was not given so we could make ourselves righteous by striving to obey it. The purpose of God's law was to prove how sinful we really are.

God's law is meant to humble us, but instead men take God's law and attempt to assert their own self-righteousness before men. Paul said when we do this it is because we love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Paul was not the only one who noticed this. The writers in the gospel accounts also pointed out that the Pharisees loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. Read John 12:42-43.

Men want to make their name great. They want to exalt their position so they can experience power over other people. Why would someone want to exalt themselves over others? Because Satan has

deceived mankind into believing that the way to provide for one's own self, the way to protect one's own self, is to make a name for one's self. This is the deception of the world system which Satan created.

When men love the praise of men more than the praise of God they are deceived. They believe the lie of making a name for themselves. They believe the lie of pride, position, and prestige. They believe these lies and reject the truth of God's word.

The only man who received praise from God was the one who denied himself, took up his cross, and followed the way of Jesus Christ. It is by dying to self that we find true life. It is by denying self that we find the life of Christ.

It is by uniting together with Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection that we experience true life and praise from God.

All Have Sinned – Chapter 3

3:1-2

The Jewish advantage was the Bible. God gave his word to Israel, and they carried it with them. Of course, this was why they were persecuted and killed by the world. The devil and the world system hates, persecutes, and kills anyone who carries God's word.

How was it an advantage then to have God's word? It was an advantage because it meant God had a special interest in you. God chose you. This may mean suffering for now but ultimately it meant God had a special plan for you. (Psalm 30:5)

The Lord does have a special plan for Israel. His promise to Israel will be fulfilled and they will receive a kingdom. The prophets pointed to the day the Lord would establish the kingdom of Israel. All other nations on earth will serve the King and Israel. Israel is the glory of God and God has a plan for the nation of Israel.

The advantage of the Jew was that he received God's promise and God's word. The Lord will fulfill his word to Israel and his promise is always yes and amen.

As a Christian we should never think the church replaced Israel in God's plan. Israel, the church, and also the kingdom coming to earth are all a reflection of who God is. God is three in one. In the same way God's people are three in one. God's people are Israel, the church, and those who God will take out of the nations during the millennium. God's people are three in one. We are one people of God, distinct in our special way, yet one people serving the one true God. There is one Messiah for all of God's people, and God's Messiah is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul never gave up on the Jews. He prayed for Israel to be saved. I believe he wrote the book of Hebrews for Jewish Christians. He expressed his heart for Israel in Romans 9:1-5.

The greatest advantage of the Jew was that Jesus is a Jew. Even though the Jews in Jesus' day did not receive him in a national sense there were individual Jews who knew the Messiah. Israel will in the future receive him as the Messiah as one nation. All Israel will be saved. (Romans 11:26)

The teaching that God no longer has a plan for Israel or that the church replaced Israel stems from bad Bible interpretation. It results in an incorrect view of end times events. Let us pray the Lord will give us wisdom in understanding the Bible so we can see God's plan for the ages.

3:3-4

Does it matter if people do not believe in God? Some think God exists for man because men choose to believe in God. This is a trend of thinking in society. To the unbeliever everything is relative to the individual. This is really mental illness. It makes the individual into a "god". This kind of worldview makes the individual into a "god". This is the worldview promoted by Satan. Sadly, it completely controls the thinking of the common man on the street today.

What if some do not believe? Shall the unbelief of men make the faith of God without effect? God exists whether or not men believe in him. God exists independent of man's belief or faith. God is! God created the world and he created man. God does not depend upon man's belief. Man depends upon God's mercy and grace.

Paul said that despite the unbelief in Israel God would still fulfill his promise to Israel. God will follow through with what he said even if men do not believe. The Lord does not depend on man to accomplish his goal and purpose.

If we believe in him we become active participants in God's plan. By having faith in the Lord Jesus we benefit from God's promises and God's word. Through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we escape from the wrath of God. This wrath is upon the sons of disobedience.

Christians who follow bad theology may think they replace Israel. It is true there is a pause in God's plan for national Israel. However, after the rapture of the church, the plan for Israel will resume once again. When the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled then God's plan for Israel will resume. Current events point to God picking up where he left off with Israel two thousand years ago. The day of the church will come to an end and the day of the kingdom will arrive.

Unbelievers think they create reality with positive thoughts but Christians know that only the Lord God Almighty is God. There is no other God but the Lord. Read Isaiah 45:5-6, 22; Isaiah 46:9.

Men are deceived to think they are the master of their life. They think they are a "god". However, this is the lie of the serpent. This is the lie the devil told Eve in the garden and it is the same lie he sells to men today. (Genesis 3:5). This is the lie people are deluded with in the last days. This is the lie the Antichrist embodies when he reveals himself.

Men do not create reality. This is the lie of sorcery and witchcraft, and it is a lie which has embedded itself in the church through false gospels such as hyper-faith and prosperity theology.

God is true and men are liars. We need to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God and confess that we are wrong. We need to acknowledge that God is righteous, holy, and pure. The Lord Jesus is worthy of all honor, glory, and praise.

3:9-18

Man in his natural state has no fear of God. He might fear his earthly parents or authorities but he does not fear God. There is no fear of God in the heart of the unbelieving man. As a result, men constantly leave destruction and misery behind them. Where they tread, misery and destruction will follow. This may not be the intention in the heart of man but it will surely follow him. It is as sure as the sun rises and sets.

Men are swift to shed blood. According to Jesus one does not have to actually kill a man physically to have murder in one's heart toward another. All it takes is selfish anger and hatred to be guilty of murder. From this viewpoint even slandering people is the same as killing them.

The unbeliever has a mouth filled with bitterness and cursing. I noticed one of the first changes in my life after I was filled with the Holy Spirit was that I immediately stopped cursing. I no longer used cuss words in my every day speech. It was no longer part of my everyday vocabulary.

Notice how the Holy Spirit ties in words we speak with the poison of snakes. Spiritually and literally the effect of bitter and cursing words has this effect. It poisons those who hear it. It spreads death and lies everywhere. When men do not believe in God or fear God their tongues are used for spreading death and lies. They are one with the serpent in principle and goal. They live for self just like the devil.

The Holy Spirit teaches us that there is no man who is righteous or who does what is good. No man in his natural state seeks after God or wants to know God.

It is a miracle when men seek after the living God. This is God's mercy when men seek the Lord and call upon his name. It is a miracle when a man calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

Everyone is under the condemnation of sin. Men are worshipers of self and so walk in agreement with the devil. This is the natural state of every man in this world.

The only answer is the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. By putting our faith in the Lord Jesus and staking our life upon his finished, completed work we are delivered from self, sin, the world, and the devil. We receive forgiveness of sin and are welcomed into the kingdom of God.

Let us never forget how deceitful the heart of the natural man is. There is no fear of God in him. If he does not fear God then he is capable of committing any evil or sin given a certain circumstance. Let us never believe that men are good. They are not. Men are evil and sinful. I'll never forget what the message of a street preacher I heard in Philadelphia one time. She said, "Do you want to see the devil? Then look into the mirror." She had it right.

May the Lord help us to see our true condition and cause us to humble our hearts and repent. Let us turn to God in repentance and put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

3:19-20

God gave us the ten commandments because he knew we could not keep them. What? According to what the Holy Spirit taught us the purpose of the law was to demonstrate how sinful we are.

The law demonstrates how sinful men are. It is a ruler placed beside a crooked piece of timber. Men by nature are crooked and broken. The perfection of God's law brings this out in contrast. No wonder sinners hate to read the Bible. It does nothing but rebuke and correct them.

Whatever the law says it says to those who are under the law. The law of God speaks to the Jewish man and tells him he is a sinner. It speaks to the Gentile and tells him he is a sinner. God provides the law so that the entire world will know it is guilty before God.

We need to close our mouth and stop defending ourselves. We are guilty. We are sinners. We need to be quiet. We have no defense against a holy God.

What does someone look like who holds onto the rags of their own righteousness? They will defend themselves even when no one accuses them. They come up with defenses, stories, and excuses for their actions and words. They do not understand that we are defenseless in the face of God's law. God's law is perfect. There is no flaw in it. We are all guilty and corrupt before a holy God.

We should meditate upon this until it seeps into our heart. No one is justified by the deeds of the law. Obeying the ten commandments does not justify anyone before God. If a man were to start today and obey God's law perfectly he could not be justified because in the past he already broke God's law. Every person has shattered God's law into a million pieces. There is no point trying to talk ourselves out of our guilt. We are guilty, guilty, guilty. The law brings us to the knowledge of our guilt before God. By the law is the knowledge of sin.

We are not saved, justified, or sanctified by striving to obey the law of God. It does not promote spiritual growth or life. It does not make us more sanctified. Those who think the observance of rules and laws makes them more spiritual or pleasing to God are deceived. It will only produce self-righteousness, pride, and the attitude of religion which Jesus severely condemned in the Pharisees.

Our only hope is faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our only hope is in the Savior Jesus Christ who died on the cross, was buried, and rose again on the third day. Our only hope is trusting in the completed and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. God the Father placed us into Christ and united us together with him in death, burial and resurrection. This is the way to freedom from sin, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life.

3:21-26

The way God saves men demonstrates God's righteousness. The method God uses to save us from our sins demonstrates the glory and honor of God. We want this to be the case. We always want God to be glorified and we want his righteousness to be exalted.

The righteousness of God is revealed by Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus is God's righteousness and all of the law and the prophets point to him. The law and the prophets testify and witness to their own

fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. God imputes the righteousness of Christ to everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the only way God can be just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus.

It would be impossible for God to be holy and forgive men of their sins if not for Christ Jesus. What Jesus did made it possible for God to punish sin and hate sin and yet forgive sinners. There is no other way this would be possible. It is through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus that God demonstrated his justice and that he justifies freely those who put their faith in Jesus Christ.

It does not matter what cultural, racial, ethnic, or language background a man comes from. Anyone, Jew or Gentile, who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is justified and forgiven. All of our sins are forgiven through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone has sinned and there is only one way our sins can be forgiven. Faith in Jesus Christ allows God to impute his own righteousness to us. He takes upon himself our sins and gives to us his righteousness. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

There is nothing we can do in this except believe God's word. All God wants us to do is believe him and trust him. (Hebrews 11:6)

Once again let us underline the truth that we are not under law. It is not through striving to obey God's law that we are saved. If we believed in the Lord Jesus then we cannot think now it is our job to strive to obey God's law. All our striving is in vain. It does not make us more sanctified to follow God's law, and it does not commend us to God in any way. Only one thing is pleasing to God. This one thing is faith in his son Jesus Christ. Read John 6:28-29.

3:27-31

After proving that all men are under sin Paul introduced us to the righteousness of God in his Son Jesus Christ. God chose to save us, not based on what we do, but based on what his Son Jesus Christ did for us. Our part is to have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and not be moved away from the gospel to any other religion, system, philosophy, or psychology. We are called to abide in the work which Christ did for us. The conclusion Paul presented was that men are justified by faith alone without the deeds of the law. Therefore we are not saved by striving to obey God's law. We are justified by faith in Christ Jesus.

God is not only the God of the Jews but of the Gentiles as well. It is through the Jews we received the word of God and it is through the Jews we received our Savior Jesus Christ. Salvation came to us through the Jewish people as the Lord Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.

We do not make the law of God void through faith. Jesus said that every jot and tittle of the law would be fulfilled. Jesus himself fulfilled God's law for us. What we could not do because of the weakness of our flesh God did for us through his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Now we are placed into God's Son by faith. God the Father himself placed us into his Son who became our "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption". (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Paul asked this question about boasting. We should not boast in ourselves or in what we might accomplish with our intellect or willpower or strength. Instead, we should boast in what the Lord Jesus

Christ did. Boasting in ourselves shows the pride of self worship. When we boast in the Lord we demonstrate our knowledge of our true condition and who the Lord truly is. Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. Also, read Jeremiah 9:24.

Justified By Faith – Chapter 4

4:1

Paul proved from the Bible and logic that all men are under sin. Paul moved toward his next point which was justification by faith and not by the works of the law.

To make his case Paul used the example of Abraham. He called Abraham "our father" even though this letter to the Romans was written to a Gentile audience. Abraham was not just the father of Israel, but also a father of many nations. Paul used the example of Abraham's life to prove his case that justification was by faith and not through the works of the law.

To be justified means we are declared not guilty of whatever accusation is against us. God is just and is also the justifier of those who believe in His Son Jesus Christ.

The religious people Paul worked with, however, wanted to continue following their own interpretation of the Old Testament. Paul's teaching about God's grace and our faith in God's Son created enemies who accused him of being an enemy of Israel. Paul was not an enemy of the Jewish people or Israel. He simply pointed everyone to the fulfillment of God's law in Jesus Christ.

Abraham was an example of faith before the law of God was given. Before God gave Israel the law he declared Abraham a righteous man because of Abraham's faith in God's promise. Abraham heard God's word and believed what God said to him. He trusted in the Lord. By this God declared Abraham righteous.

In the same way we are declared righteous when we believe in God's Son Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God's word who became a man and lived among us. Men literally touched him, heard him, saw him, and walked with him. They came to understand he is God in the flesh. He is God with us, Immanuel.

Abraham, the ancestor of the Jewish people, was also the spiritual father of all those who receive the righteousness of God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

4:2-3

If Abraham were justified by works he might have something to boast about, but he could not boast before God. Any man no matter how perfect and righteous will never live up to the standard of God himself. No one can be as perfect, holy, and righteous as God. Since we cannot attain to the righteousness of God then justification can never be by good works.

What does scripture say? Scripture says Abraham believed God and God counted Abraham's faith as righteousness. Does this mean God made Abraham into a perfect man? If you read the life story of Abraham in the book of Genesis you do not see a perfect man. You see a man who made a lot of

mistakes and did not live a perfect life. However, because he believed in God his faith was counted as righteousness.

Another way of understanding "counted unto him" is to think in terms of financial accounting. It is the same as if we were to say God put money in the bank for Abraham. God counted Abraham as righteous despite his mistakes or sins. He did this because Abraham believed God's word.

This works exactly the same for us today as it did for the believing remnant within the nation of Israel. The Lord had a believing people in Israel, in the church, and will have a people during the millennium in the nations who believe in him. All three are the one people of God. They are of the same faith as Abraham. They believe in God's Messiah the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are justified by faith in what the Lord Jesus did for us in his finished work. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. Everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus and calls upon his name is justified. God imputes his righteousness to every man who believes in his Son Jesus Christ.

4:4-5

It is easier for us to understand what Paul taught if put into terms anyone can understand. This is what Paul did by using the analogy of employment. If a man works at a job then his wages are an obligation. However, God will never be obligated to man. This is why we can never approach God on the basis of works. To attempt to approach God on this basis is offensive to God. Instead, God wants to justify and save men on the basis of giving us a free gift. His free gift to us is His Son Jesus Christ.

For a man who does not work for justification but believes in the God who justifies the ungodly his faith is credited as righteousness. God wants us to know and believe He is good and He gives us the best. He gives us his Son Jesus Christ.

Jesus is our salvation, He is our justification, He is our sanctification, He is our wisdom. 1 Corinthians 1:30, "*But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*"

Jesus is everything we need for this life and the next life. He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one can approach God except through God's free gift to us who is Jesus Christ. (John 14:6)

When we see we are sinners and under God's wrath then what we need to do to escape wrath is believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Read Acts 16:30-31.

God's free gift to us is eternal life through his Son Jesus Christ. Who would turn down such an offer? Only those who would rather work for their salvation. Those who work for their salvation do so in complete unbelief of God's revealed will in the Bible.

4:6-8

Paul quoted Psalm 32:1-2. Paul moved from using Abraham as an example to King David to confirm that justification from God is by faith alone apart from works.

How did David know about this? Did David understand what he wrote in the same way Paul interpreted it? I think he did because the Holy Spirit is the one who used both men to record the Bible.

Some people have strange ideas about how people in Israel were saved before Christ. I am alarmed at some of what I hear men teach on this. They say strange things about how Jews were saved during the time of the Old Testament. Some teach Jews today do not need to believe in Jesus to be saved! What a tragedy that a system of theology separates men from the truth in God's word.

I won't repeat their teaching anymore but let me underline this truth: all men were always saved by faith. It is by faith men were saved and not by works. This is not a new teaching God gave the apostle Paul. God always saved men on the basis of his grace and men's faith. Men never were saved by works. Never!

King David understood men were forgiven of their sins by faith apart from works.

From the beginning man was saved by faith in what God said to him. God spoke to Adam and Eve in the Garden and revealed to them that a Seed of the Woman would crush the head of the serpent. The serpent would crush his heel, but the Seed would crush the head of the serpent. From the beginning those who believed the gospel of the Messiah were saved by faith. Never were men saved or justified through religious ritual or works of the law.

Paul taught us the purpose God gave Israel the law, the ordinances, the priesthood, the sacrificial system, and the ark of the covenant. All these were a shadow of the reality of Jesus Christ. All this pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have no doubt that believers in Israel, the remnant within the nation, understood the gospel. They did not have the more complete revelation of Jesus we do, but nevertheless they knew enough to believe and be saved. God revealed himself to them and they knew Messiah would come. They were saved looking forward in the same way we are saved looking back to Christ. Moses prophesied of the Messiah and so did all the prophets point to the Messiah and the Kingdom of the Messiah.

How happy are those whose sins are forgiven because they believe in the God who justifies men! Jesus paid it all. Men are saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ from beginning to end, through all time and history. David was our witness and he gave his testimony of this blessing.

4:9-12

Notice the blessing of being justified by faith was established for both Jew and the Gentile. A man who was a physical descendant of Abraham was justified like the man who was not. A Jew was saved by God's promise when he walked in the footsteps of the faith that father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

Religious observance does not provide justification or salvation. When men put emphasis on circumcision, baptism, church ordinances, or any outward observance it is because they do not understand the good news. All men are justified freely by grace in the finished work of the Messiah. The Gentile person today is saved by God in the same manner as the ancient Israelite was saved by God. We are saved by faith in what God promised. He promised us his Son, the Messiah. Jesus Christ is

the Messiah God promised to Israel and to the world. It is through the Jewish people the Messiah arrived.

Circumcision or baptism or communion are all things which men who are justified by faith do as a witness that they belong to God. It is a mark of the ownership of God upon the individual's life. However, many people get this backwards and think the physical seal of circumcision or getting put under water in baptism is what justifies them. If this is true then how could Jesus Christ have told the thief on the cross that he would see him that day in paradise?

Everyone is given the free gift of eternal life through faith in God's Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus paid the penalty for sins when he died on the cross. Now God can be just and justify the sinner who puts his faith in what Christ did. Our sins are forgiven because of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are set free from religion so we can serve God in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In Christ Jesus there is neither Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free, but Christ is all in all. Read Colossians 3:11.

Don't be led astray by attempts to separate God's people into different categories. The true people of God were always justified by faith in the Messiah. These true people of the faith of Abraham are God's overcoming remnant.

4:13-15

The promises God made to Abraham were given before Moses received the ten commandments. Paul used this fact to demonstrate that justification and salvation are related to God's promise and our faith. Justification and salvation do not relate to the law of God because the law of God produces wrath.

When men make a law they also need someone to enforce the law or it is not a real law but only a suggestion. All of God's law which he gave to Moses are enforced by God himself.

Jesus Christ fulfilled all of God's law so we could escape the wrath of God enforcing the law. God enforced the punishment of his law when Jesus died on Calvary.

Now we put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and escape the wrath of God. We are no longer subject to the law of God because we are in Christ Jesus.

God made promises to Abraham and his descendants concerning inheriting a promised land. The boundaries of this land are clear. God has not changed his mind about giving this land to the physical descendants of Abraham.

However, this land promise cannot be completely fulfilled without the Messiah. The Messiah is Israel's King who will reign over this kingdom. The promise of the land is tied directly with the promise of the Messiah.

Those who believed God's promise to Abraham concerning the land also believed God's promise of Messiah. By faith in the Messiah men were justified and saved no matter what time period in world history they lived in. In the past men looked forward to Messiah. Men today look back to what Jesus

did on Calvary. In the future men will be justified and saved through faith in the finished work of the Messiah the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's argument was that if righteousness came through the law then what was the point of having faith? If God justified us because our parents were Jews then what was the need for us to have a personal faith in the promise of the living God? This is the same deception children of Christian parents fall into today. Many church goers are deceived that they are right with God because their parents were Christians or because they were raised in a church. This is a religious deception.

Each person must come to personal faith in Jesus. This is the only way God relates to men. He deals with each person on an individual basis when it comes to justification and salvation.

God also deals with mankind on the level of nations. He gave national promises to Israel, and all of God's promises will be fulfilled. God never breaks his word and his promises which he gives to men.

4:16

In a strange twist we have the flip side problem of what Paul taught. In his day he tried to convince people that Gentiles were part of the Lord's plan and could be grafted into the Jewish tree. Today people have the attitude that Jews no longer have any part in God's present or future plans. However, what Paul said here applies both ways. The gospel is for the Jew and the Gentile alike. All men are sinners, and all men can be saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. One day, as well, God will carry on to completion his plan for national Israel in the kingdom age.

God's promise works with our faith and is completely a matter of grace and not of the law. This is so important to understand. Religious men continue trying to pull unwitting victims back under the curse of the law. The only hope for any man is God's grace expressed in his Son Jesus Christ. Only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can a man receive forgiveness of sins, deliverance from sin, self, the world, and the devil.

This phrase "the faith of Abraham" shows us that men were always saved in the same manner. Abraham was counted righteous by God in the same manner as men today are counted righteous with God. It is through faith in the promise of God. God's promise to Abraham involved the promised land and that he would be a father. However, we understand that the promise of a son to Abraham pointed us back to the original promise of God in the Garden of Eden about the Seed of the Woman who would crush the head of the Serpent. Men through all of time and history who believed in God's promise received justification and forgiveness of their sins. The just always lived by faith and did not live by striving to obey law.

Even those to whom God gave the law of Moses were only justified by faith. They were not made righteous by going through rituals of animal sacrifice. If those actions were not inspired by a reverential faith and trust in God's promise then it meant nothing. Jumping through the hoops of a religious system does not make a man right with God.

All those who are of the faith of Abraham from beginning to end are God's people. They are the remnant of spiritual people within the nation of Israel who believed God's promise. They are the remnant of spiritual people with the outward structure of the church who believe in God's promise.

They will also be those in the age to come who believe in God's Messiah that will comprise a final remnant out of the nations in the kingdom age. All three are one. God is three in one. So are God's people three in one.

4:17-22

God's promise to Abraham was that he would have a son from his wife Sarah. As the years passed by without this promise being fulfilled it became physically impossible for Sarah or Abraham to have a child in the natural. Their bodies were old. However, Abraham did not focus on the impossibility of his situation and how his age and Sarah's age seemed to contradict the promise which God gave him. Scripture here described "the deadness of Sarah's womb". This means it was impossible in the natural for her to have children. However, with God we do not consider what is impossible.

What is impossible to God? We are dealing with someone who created the universe, the stars, the moon, the sun, and the earth. He is the one who created man in the first place. Jesus said nothing is impossible with God.

Abraham believed God. Even though what God said was impossible in the natural he still believed God and trusted in the promise which God gave him. Abraham did not stagger in unbelief, but instead he was strong in faith and gave glory to God. Nothing is impossible with God. Abraham was completely persuaded in his mind that what God promised he was also able to perform. As a result, God counted Abraham as righteous because of his faith.

Paul taught that our relationship with God was based completely on faith. We do not have any part in God's work except to believe in what he did. Our part is to believe in the Son of God. Our part is to believe in the promise God made to Adam and Eve and continued to make to every man whom he chose. He chose Abraham and told him the Seed he promised would come through him.

God's promise is true. The nation of Israel came from Abraham, and from the nation of Israel came our Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. God's word is true and God's promise is true.

The Lord looks for men who believe in him. He looks for those who stand upon his promises and upon his word and are not moved. Let us not stagger in unbelief, but instead let us be strong in faith and give glory to God. Nothing is impossible with God.

4:23-25

The account of Abraham was not only written for Abraham's sake, but also for us to follow his example. We also can receive righteousness by faith when we believe in the God who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. Jesus was delivered over to death on a cross for our sins and offenses, and he was raised from the dead again so we could be justified by God. Through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus we receive forgiveness of sins, justification, redemption, deliverance from sin, self, the world, and the devil. The Lord has done it all for us.

We enter these blessings by faith in the Lord Jesus. Just like God imputed to Abraham righteousness because of his faith, so also today God imputes his righteousness to those who believe and trust in him.

In the first three chapters of Romans Paul proved the point that all men are sinners. Some men are flaunted sinners in their idolatry and sexual immorality. Other men are sinners because even though they know the truth of God's law they continue to break God's laws. Other men are also sinners because they know the truth in their conscience and yet continue to act in contradiction to what their conscience tells them is right and wrong. All men are sinners and all men are in need of salvation from God's wrath and punishment against sin.

In chapter 4 we read that God provides a way for men to escape his wrath. He did this by providing his son the Lord Jesus Christ to be the sacrifice for our sins on the cross. In this way God could be just and holy in his hatred towards sin, and yet still justify those who commit those crimes against his law. He is just and is also the justifier of sinners.

He has done all of this through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. God himself placed us into his Son Jesus Christ and united us with him. We are united together with the Son of God and God counts us righteous as His Son.

Peace With God – Chapter 5

5:1

Most people do not have peace with God. They might have peace with themselves, or peace with their neighbors, or peace with their family, but they have no peace with God. Most people never consider peace with God. God does not enter their mind at all. They do not understand that a sword of God's wrath hangs over their head and is ready to fall upon them.

I have known some unusual people who found peace with God. I've known men whose lives were dedicated to destruction through drugs, violence, and drunkenness who turned to God and in a moment found peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Their lives were completely transformed by this experience of finding peace with God.

The world system offers false peace through money, immorality, or relationships. This peace must be continuously maintained through new and exciting experiences. The soul must be stimulated through intense conversations on politics, or religion, or social topics. They must constantly seek exotic experiences in order to maintain peace of mind. It is temporary, however. It does not last. At night the loneliness of separation from the Creator creeps back up to them. They cannot put it in words other than to say they are lonely and sad. This is why so many turn to alcohol, drugs, or sex. This ache in the soul is something we were created with. Only the Most High God expressed in the Son of God Jesus Christ can fill that emptiness in the heart of man.

We can have peace with God right now. Today. Turn to God and confess you are wrong and he is right. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Believe he died for your sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. He is able to save to the uttermost all those who come to God by him because he lives forever to make intercession for us. He is our high priest forever. Read Psalm 85:8.

5:2

It is by the Lord Jesus Christ we have access by faith into the grace in which we stand. We stand by faith in the grace revealed to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. God's grace is displayed through the Lord Jesus Christ and by believing in him we stand. There is no other foundation but the Lord Jesus Christ. If we try to build on anything else we will fail. God designed us so that only when we live by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can we find purpose and meaning. God provides grace to us when we believe in his Son.

We have access by faith to approach God's throne of grace with confidence because of what Jesus did in his death, burial, and resurrection. He paid the penalty for our sins in his death. He was buried. On the third day he rose again. We are justified and made righteous through the finished and completed work of the Lord Jesus Christ. God imputes his own righteousness to us when we believe the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Read Hebrews 4:16.

We have access by faith to the throne of God's grace. We can approach God with confidence not because of who we are or what we have done but completely upon the work which Christ accomplished for us. God himself places us into Christ and counts us as righteous. We exchange the rags of our self-righteousness for the white robes of his righteousness.

Not only this but we also rejoice because of the hope which is in front of us. What is this hope? It is the hope of the glory of God which will be revealed at the return of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ will return to this earth in power and in glory. He will receive us unto himself that where he is we will be also. We will receive new and resurrected bodies which will be like his body. We will be with the Lord forever. This is the blessed hope of the church in these last days. Our hope is in the return of the Lord Jesus. He will catch away his bride. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18.

5:3-5

To "glory in tribulation" is a foreign idea to unbelievers. They may understand how an athlete or outdoors man may enjoy the rigor of discipline and training in a sports endeavor but in general people do not comprehend how tribulation is something a man would glory in.

Only someone born again by the Spirit of God can truly appreciate the words here. We glory in tribulation. This means Paul could see the importance and value of hardship, opposition, and challenges. He learned through experience the value of weakness.

The value of weakness is learning to trust in the Lord. These troubles, combined with faith in the Lord, produce a specific quality in a man. This quality is described as patience. As we continue to endure through trials we develop spiritual muscle. This is seen through the patience of a man of God enduring tribulation.

This patience builds a pattern of experience in life. As the man of God looks back on the trials he endured he has hope. This hope is based on the knowledge of God's faithfulness and God's provision. God provides and God protects. As we see the Lord working repeatedly it fills us with hope for the future.

God who was faithful to us is the same God who will be faithful in the future. We have hope because the Lord Jesus is the God of hope. (Romans 15:13)

We are not ashamed to hope in the Lord Jesus. We see his goodness and mercy in our lives. He fills our heart with his love by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are enabled by God's Spirit to love others. God fills the believer with his love.

I am reminded of Corrie ten Boom. She shared in her testimony how she was confronted with one of the former German guards at a concentration camp. This man approached her as a new believer in Christ after one of her meetings. She said she felt the power of God's Spirit coursing through her arm when she reached out and took his hand and expressed God's love and forgiveness to him.

This love of God lives inside the Christian. He has God's love inside him. He can love his enemies and forgive those who persecute him.

I remember Richard Wurmbrand said he was able to love by God's power the guards in his communist prison who tortured him and other prisoners. This is only achieved by God living in the heart of the Christian.

God fills us with his love. The Holy Spirit lives inside the Christian believer. We are a temple of the Holy Spirit.

5:6-8

Sometimes when a new Christian sins he may ask whether he should get saved again. I had new Christians ask me if they should get baptized again after they backslid. My question for them was this: "When did Christ die for you?"

The Bible says while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Christ died for the ungodly. He did not die for people who were perfect or righteous. Jesus even taught people in his earthly ministry that he did not come to call the righteous but instead sinners to repentance.

A man who believes in the Lord Jesus and is afraid of losing his salvation does not need to be afraid. We are completely secure because when Jesus died for us it was while we were still sinners.

The Lord Jesus loved us at our worst moment in life. When we were lying in a ditch, drunk, covered in filth, even then the Lord Jesus loved us and died for us on the cross.

We do not need to get saved again. Our salvation was bought and paid for before we were ever born.

When we get hold upon this and stand upon this we see it is not necessary to go through water baptism over and over. We do not need to get saved again. All we need to do is believe what the Lord Jesus accomplished for us. Jesus died for the ungodly.

Christ Jesus came into this world to save that which was lost. He came looking for sinners. Read 1 Timothy 1:15.

5:9-11

We are saved from the wrath of God through the blood which the Lord Jesus shed upon the cross at Calvary. When we were God's enemies Christ died for us. He died on the cross for us when we were still in our unbelief and sins. Through the atonement Jesus made we were reconciled to God. Now that we are saved by the blood of Jesus how much more then are we saved by the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. He did not just die on the cross. He was buried. And on the third day he rose from the grave. He rose up out of that grave. He spoiled principalities and powers and made a show of them openly and triumphed over them in it.

We rejoice today in the Lord Jesus Christ because we have received atonement. What does this mean? Atonement? In the Old Testament once a year the high priest would enter the most holy place with a sacrifice for the sins of the nation of Israel. This was called the day of Atonement. This was when the blood of the Lamb was shed. This covered the sins of Israel until the time when the Lord Jesus came and fulfilled all these types and shadows. This pointed to the work which the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled when he died, was buried, and rose again.

The Lord Jesus made atonement for our sins. Our sins are now under the blood and we are cleansed. Our sins are not just covered but cleansed. We have been sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb and we are now white as snow. We no longer wait for the wrath of God to fall on us because God poured out his wrath on his own Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

We can't thank the Lord Jesus enough for what he did. Let us offer him praise and thanksgiving. Let us offer him our lives in thanks for what he did.

5:12-17

Here we see the state of man from Adam and the state of man through the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't know of a scripture which more concisely describes the human situation.

Sin entered the world through Adam's fall and thereafter death passed upon all men. All men born of Adam die because of sin. Death came upon all men even before God gave the law to Moses and Israel. However, sins were not counted against men in a legal sense until this law was given. After the law was given men not only died because of sin but they were charged guilty with the knowledge of sins.

Through the one man, Adam, sin came. In a like manner through one man, Jesus Christ, the gift of righteousness came to man. Through Adam all men die. Through the Lord Jesus Christ all men have the offer of eternal life.

The gospel is described for us in this passage. We have the choice between death and life before us. Our bodies die because of Adam but we receive the gift of life through the Lord Jesus Christ. Through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we receive the gift of eternal life. Our sins are cleansed from us and we are made righteous. God justified us through the atonement and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The biblical framework of thinking is described here. Men are sinners and in desperate need of the Savior Jesus Christ. It is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we receive the gift of eternal life. If we fail to receive this gift from the Lord then we shall perish in our sins. Not only will our physical body

die but our soul will experience what the Bible calls the "second" death. This second death is eternal separation from God. Separation from God means the Christ rejecting soul endures eternity burning in a lake of fire. Those are the facts and as simply as I can present them from the Bible.

There is no excuse for any man on this earth. God provided a way for us to escape from his just wrath against sin. His provision is his own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through him.

5:18-21

What was the offense of the one? This points back to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Eve was deceived and Adam sinned in eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When they did this condemnation came on all men because all men came through Adam and Eve.

Through the righteousness of the one man, Jesus Christ, the free gift of eternal life came to all men. Just as in Adam all men die so in Jesus Christ all men can live. To be taken out of Adam and placed into Christ Jesus only requires one thing of us: faith. We simply believe the gospel and God himself takes us out of Adam and places us into Christ Jesus. We are translated out of death and darkness and into eternal life and light.

God's law was given so that men could see how heinous their sins are. The law does not make men righteous; it only points out how sinful we truly are.

The law causes sin to abound. Sin is clearly seen as exceedingly sinful. However, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. God's grace is greater than all our sins.

Sin reigned to bring death in us but grace reigns to bring righteousness and eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are no longer under the law of sin and death. We are no longer under God's wrath and God's law. Instead, we are now under God's grace and receive eternal life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gift of God – Chapter 6

6:1-2

This question might have arose because of the declaration that where sin abounded grace did much more abound. Some confused Paul as saying that since we are not under law but under grace we could therefore commit sin. This was not what Paul said. He needed to address the question because this was a problem which fallen men get into. They turn the grace of God into a license to sin. We know in Paul's letters grace does not give us permission to sin.

Read Titus 2:11-13. This clarifies that grace was not a doctrine which provided an excuse to sin. Paul's answer to this question is a resounding "No!" Grace does not teach men to sin or promote sin. It does provide us with God's power to live an overcoming life.

Here we read the revelation the Holy Spirit gave Paul of how a Christian overcomes self, sin, the world, and the devil. The path to overcome sin is the same path taken to receive forgiveness. The same gospel which justified also sanctified. After we were saved by faith in God's grace through the finished work of Christ we were also sanctified by it. We were delivered from sin because God united us with His Son in death, burial, and resurrection. This was what Romans chapter 6 goes into.

God's grace is the death blow to the power of sin. Sin is no longer able to reign in the life of those who abide in God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

There are men who teach a false message of grace. They imply that men can live in sin. They turn the grace of God into a license to sin. This was exposed in the early church. (Jude 1:4).

Men who teach we can live in sin because we are under grace do not understand grace. The grace of God does not provide an excuse for men to live sinful lives. It is God's grace that teaches us to live holy lives. Grace teaches a life of holiness, purity, and righteousness. God's grace sanctifies the Christian who abides in the gospel of Jesus Christ. God's grace is the power from God to overcome the downward pull of sin and death. A man who receives God's grace is recognized by humility, holiness, and purity of life.

6:2-3

Paul did not explain what he proclaimed in these verses. He just put it out there. Dead to sin? Baptized into his death? It takes time to meditate on what Paul taught. It is important to take as much time as necessary to get hold on what Paul expressed. It is one of the foundations of the Christian life. If we do not grasp what Paul taught in this chapter there will be little victory over sin in the believer's life. A man can be saved and live in continual spiritual defeat. However, Paul taught something which can remedy the problem of sin.

How does a man find victory over sin in his life? Is the path to victory in asking other people to hold us accountable? Is the path to victory in confessing to everyone our struggles? I've seen people try these methods and they always fail. Accountability to other men does not keep us from sin or prevent us from committing sin. Being honest about our sins with a group of people does not help us. It only keeps us in a continuous state of shame until our hearts harden and we give up. This is not the way to victory over sin.

The way to victory over sin is the same way we receive forgiveness for sin. It is by faith in the gospel. Let us review the message of the gospel. Paul outlined the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."

The first point in the gospel is that Christ died for our sins. Paul took that truth in the gospel and applied it to the individual Christian in Romans chapter 6. He said what happened to Christ happened to us! How is this possible? I was not even born when Jesus died on the cross. How could I possibly be "in" Christ when he died.

This is where faith in the eternal God comes in. When we believe the gospel God sees us in his Son Jesus Christ. He sees us crucified and dead in Christ Jesus on that cross. We were united together with him. We were made one with Christ.

When a Christian discerns this and grasps the truth by faith he will experience an astounding change. What is true in eternity enters time in the Christian's life. He discovers he is dead to sin. He is dead to it. A dead man is not tempted by sin. A dead man is not tempted by anything really.

Let's not take the analogy of a corpse too far because we know while we are in the body we are alive. As far as God is concerned we are dead in Christ Jesus on that cross. The power of sin is broken in our lives.

I have experienced when I stand in the truth and remember the truth the Holy Spirit applies the truth to me. He makes sure in my life what Christ did is applied to me. He makes sure sin does not reign over me. The Holy Spirit honors the finished work of Jesus Christ.

However, as soon as I move away from the gospel things change. As soon as I try to figure out myself and why I fail or why I am tempted I start sinking. It is like a man who struggles in quicksand. The harder he fights the quicker he sinks beneath the sand. We cannot fight ourselves, we cannot fight sin, we cannot overcome it because it is a real power just like gravity. If a man decided he no longer believed in gravity and jumped off a building he would still fall. No matter how hard he flapped his arms he would still fall like a stone. The power of sin is that real.

But the power of God's grace is stronger. Where sin abounds then grace does much more abound! God's power to live in victory over sin is given to the believing Christian who stands upon the gospel. As long as we continue to believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ then we continue to experience God's grace. God's grace is his power to cancel out the power of sin and death. This grace is given to the man who believes the gospel, who stakes his entire life upon the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. God unites this man with his Son in death. The death of Christ is also the death of sin in us.

We are dead to sin. How can we live in it any longer? We can't. A dead man can no longer commit sin. He can only be buried.

6:4

After we died with Christ we were buried with him. Don't rationalize this. Human logic does not work in comprehending what Paul said here. By faith in the gospel God took us out of Adam and placed us into Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:30). This was the work of God from first to last, from beginning to end. Our part is only to believe. Jesus was once asked what we should do. What is our work? Jesus said that our work was to believe in the Son of God. (John 6:27-29)

Believing in the gospel really is "work". It is a decision the Christian makes each day. Just like Israel had to get out of their tent and go pick up manna every day so also the Christian must believe the gospel every day.

I don't know if I've heard a preacher teach what I say here but I know in my heart and from my experience it is true. I must believe the gospel in order to experience victory over sin and self. I must turn my eyes upon the Lord Jesus Christ in order to walk above my circumstances. God does not force me to do this. Just like Peter had to get out of the boat I must also get out of my boat of unbelief every single day.

Believing in doctrine is not enough. A relationship with the Lord is what we need. There is only one way to have this daily relationship with the Father and that is upon the basis of the gospel.

I am buried with Christ. This means a death blow fell upon my "self" life. Paul said, "it is no longer I that live". (Galatians 2:20). Self dies. When self dies sin loses its power. Sin cannot reign where the self life is dead and buried. No wonder Jesus taught us to deny self and take up the cross. There is no other way to walk in the Spirit.

Remember, God does this for us. As we abide in the gospel the Holy Spirit applies the truth to us. He makes what Christ accomplished active in our present life. It is not something we can do. We trust in the Lord to live through us.

He does this by raising us from death. We were buried. But we did not stay in the grave. Three days later Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Death could not hold him. He rose from the dead on the third day. Because Jesus overcame we also overcome in him. We are in Christ. When Christ arose from the tomb we also rose from the tomb in him.

Now we live a new life. Our old life is gone. It is dead; it is gone. We are no longer a drug addict, a drunk, a thief, a murderer, an adulterer. That old life is gone. We are a new creation in Christ Jesus. (2 Corinthians 5:17).

2 Corinthians 5:17 is one of the first bible verses I learned as a new Christian and I am so glad I did. I memorized it and the Holy Spirit made this real to me. He showed me the truth that I was no longer the old person I was before believing. When I believed the gospel I became a completely new man in Christ Jesus. Unless a man stands upon this truth he can never change.

It is possible in human determination to lay aside the liquor bottle or the drugs. It is possible to do this in human strength. I've seen people do it. However, laying down a liquor bottle does not give a person spiritual life. A man cannot have spiritual life unless he believes the gospel. Let me also add quickly that we cannot add anything more to the gospel. If we add any philosophy, system, or steps to the gospel then we empty it completely of its power. We become what the Bible describes as "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:5).

The old life of sin was buried. We are now raised with Christ to walk in a new life. This new life is the Spirit filled life. It is a life of victory over self, sin, the world, and the devil.

We must remember this every day. We cannot let this out of our mind for a single day. When you forget the gospel you begin to slip away. You will backslide I guarantee you. If your mind is overthrown by the cares of life then you will not experience spiritual victory. You must keep your mind fixed on Jesus Christ. You must get out of bed every morning, go to God in prayer, and confess to him, "I am crucified with Christ and I no longer live. I died in Christ. I was buried with him. I am risen now with Christ.

Thank you Father for placing me into Christ Jesus. I thank you that you have done all of the work from first to last. Nothing depends upon me. I simply believe your word today. I believe the gospel. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. I believe in your word and the gospel. Thank you Father. In Jesus name. Amen."

It is so simple that men walk right past it every day. It is so easy. Yet because of human pride we look for exotic religions, philosophies, or systems. Men want to have something they can work at. They don't want to just believe. They want to do something. But there is nothing we can do to change our spiritual condition. Only the Holy Spirit can make us into a new creation. And he will only do this for the man who believes in Christ alone and the finished work of Christ.

6:5

Throughout the New Testament we see the teaching of death and life. Jesus talked about a grain of wheat falling into the ground and dying so it could bring new life.

Read John 12:24. In the context Jesus talked about the corn of wheat he was sought by Gentiles. Jesus looked ahead to the time when he would not only minister to Israel but gave his life on Calvary for all men. He died on the cross so we can receive eternal life.

Paul took this and applied it to himself personally. In his letters we see that he talked about himself dying so that others would receive life. Read 2 Corinthians 4:10-12. This is a spiritual principle of dying and resurrection. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are central and of paramount importance to the Christian. This event in history is beyond comparison.

In Romans Paul taught us that our being planted together in the likeness of the Lord's death meant that we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

After the Lord Jesus rose from the dead he had a particular type of body which could appear and disappear. Yet he was not a spirit because he could eat food and was touched by his disciples. He had a resurrection body.

Christians will receive a resurrected body like the Lord Jesus. As we look forward to the blessed hope of the church, or the "harpazo", or the "catching away" of believers, we are encouraged because scripture teaches us we will receive a new body. This mortal body will be swallowed up by life. Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-57.

6:6

This is not the only place in the New Testament where we can find the phrase "old man". Here are some more references for this phrase: Ephesians 4:22, Colossians 3:9. After reading these verses on the "old man" I understand that this phrase speaks about the self-life. It points to living according to the principle of self-worship and self-love. This is the principle of sin and Satan.

Notice how Paul said we need to "put off" the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. Also, the old man is tied in with lying to people. The old man is a liar. He is deceitful. He follows the lie and not the truth.

When a man is born again by the Holy Spirit as a result of believing the gospel of Jesus Christ he receives a new nature which follows the truth instead of the lie.

However, the old man will attempt to reassert itself if we are not vigilant to abide in the gospel. The gospel is the message of the finished, completed work of Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 details the gospel for us. It is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul outlines here in Romans 6 how the gospel applied to the individual Christian.

God placed us into his Son Jesus Christ. Read 1 Corinthians 1:30. This united us together with Jesus in death, burial, and resurrection. The self-life, also known as the "old man", died in Christ on the cross. He was crucified and he died. Now we are resurrected in Christ to walk in a new life. This new life is also called the "new man". Read Ephesians 4:24.

When the self-life dies then the power of sin can no longer control us. A man who abides in Christ Jesus is dead to sin's power because he effectively is denying himself when he takes the name of Christ. You cannot exalt self (your "name") and also follow Jesus at the same time. Anyone who is united to Christ has died with Christ and their self-life old man is dead.

As a result of this death sin can no longer reign. The body of sin is done away with. It is buried in the grave and does not live again. The only one who came out of the grave was the Lord Jesus Christ. We are raised to a new life in Jesus Christ. We are no longer servants to sin. We are not slaves any longer to the passions and desires of "self". We are no longer worshiping self. We do not live for self any longer. The old man is dead. We are now a new creation in Christ Jesus.

If this seems difficult to understand then be patient. Pray and meditate on this chapter. If you earnestly seek the Lord he will reveal to you the truth. It is important to grasp this in order to live in consistent victory over self and sin.

6:7-10

Since we died with Christ we are free from sin. Since we died with Christ we believe we shall also live with him. Our death with Christ is assurance of our life with him also. Since Christ was raised from the dead he does not die anymore. Death no longer reigns over him. The Lord Jesus Christ defeated death. Death no longer has power over him. He died once for our sins. Now he lives with God forever. Jesus broke the power of death.

Men live their life in view of their end. This is why men are frantic to live as much as they can. They want to experience as much as possible while they have life in their bodies. Men are driven to experience as much as possible while there is still time. However, this frantic activity only brings them into more bondage to self and to sin. Read Hebrews 2:14-15. Man throughout his lifetime is subject to bondage because of the fear of death. The devil had the power of death but no more. The Lord Jesus defeated the devil through his death, burial, and resurrection.

As a result, those who believe in the Lord Jesus are delivered from the fear of death. They are no longer driven by the old man, the flesh, and the power of sin to experience as much in this life as possible. They have freedom to deny self and live for God in purity, holiness, and righteousness.

They are no longer driven by the craving, greedy self-life to experience everything possible. The power of lust, covetousness, and idolatry is broken. Believing in the Lord Jesus delivers a man from the fear of death which as a result sets him free from the compulsion to sin.

The fear of death is a fountain of bondage. It is a cruel task master. Fear drives men to do stupid things with their lives.

However, a man who stands by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ no longer is tormented by the fear of death. He knows deep in his soul that he lives forever with the Lord Jesus. He no longer is moved by the human fear of death. In Christ he experiences victory over death, hell, and the grave. A good chapter in the Bible to read in relation to this is First Corinthians chapter 15. It goes over in great detail the resurrection of the body and the complete defeat of death. Here is a summary verse in that chapter: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55) Also, this: "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:57)

6:11-14

When we get to this part about reckoning I used to think: "...now here is something I am supposed to work at". I thought all of this information was just "positional" truth but now I have to do this work of "reckoning". This means I have to fight the flesh. This means I must discipline myself now.

But that is wrong thinking. Reckoning myself to be dead to sin has nothing to do with me striving to keep myself under control. It has nothing to do with striving to keep the ten commandments, either.

Reckoning simply means I believe that Christ did everything for me. I simply rest in what the Lord Jesus did. There is no more striving, no more trying to control myself, no more fear of failure. Instead, I believe what the word of God says. I reckon. This means I agree God's word is true. What God's word says about Christ and about me I believe. I simply accept that God has placed me into Christ Jesus. What Jesus did two thousand years ago in time-space history was accounted as a fact in my life today. I may be removed from what Christ did by two thousand years in time-space history, but in eternity I am united together with him in death, burial, and resurrection.

What is more true? The temporary feelings of my body, my mind, and my emotions? Or what God says is the truth? What God does is more true than what I can think or feel in my body. What God says is more true than what I think.

I agree with God that he is true. The testimony of God's word is true. I reckon it for myself to be true. My reckoning does not make it true. My reckoning of the truth allows the Holy Spirit into my life. When I agree the gospel is true then the Holy Spirit moves into my spirit and applies the truth to me. He includes me in the eternal truth of what God accomplished in his Son Jesus Christ.

This sets men free from self, from sin, from the world system, and from the tyranny of the devil. We are no longer enslaved to sin and death.

We should no longer allow sin to operate in our lives. How do we accomplish this? Through faith in the finished work of Christ. By confessing and believing the gospel. When we abide in this, live in this, walk in this, confess this: then we will discover the power of God coursing through us to set us free

moment by moment from the influence of self, sin, the world, and the devil. Our body no longer belongs to us. Our body is now the temple of the Holy Spirit. Our heart cries out to God: "Make this temple holy!" We no longer give ourselves over to sin.

If we sin then we humble our heart and go back to Calvary. We confess our sin to God and he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us. Read 1 John 1:9. When we keep the gospel in our heart and mind, however, we will not fall. We will walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. We submit ourselves to God and the devil flees from us. God's word comes out of our mouth like a sharp, double-edged sword and drives away every demon, all darkness, all temptation. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Our deliverance is simply through faith in Jesus. Jesus did it all. He paid the price. We are forgiven and cleansed. We are delivered and set free from the power of sin. Death no longer holds sway over us. We are not afraid to put aside this temporary tent of the body, and even look forward to being swallowed up by the life of our resurrection body.

6:15-18

Paul asked the same question again which he asked in verse 1 of this chapter. Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? This is a question that a Jewish person might ask. They think the law is what keeps them righteous but Paul taught the law only demonstrated how sinful we are. The law does not impart righteousness. Righteousness is a free gift because of what Christ did for us. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us as a free gift when we believe the gospel. Grace does not lead people into sin.

Paul used the illustration of a servant and a master. Sin is a master. Also, righteousness is a master. In reality these are the only choices men have. We can choose to be a servant of sin by continuing in unbelief. Or we can become a servant of righteousness by believing the gospel. God does give man this choice. We would be unable to believe if the Lord did not give us another option but he has provided for us another option than sin and death.

Our option is to choose to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we believe the gospel we are grafted into God's kingdom. We receive the life of the Holy Spirit. We become a part of God's plan and his kingdom. We are no longer servants of self, sin, and Satan. Instead, we become a servant of righteousness, holiness, and Jesus Christ. The choice is clear: life or death. Slavery to righteousness or slavery to sin.

Unbelievers are deceived by pride into thinking they are free. However, they are not free. They are slaves to sin. They are in bondage to their own passions and lusts. They are prisoners and deceived by the devil into building their own prison house.

I've talked with people who did not want to be a Christian because they thought they would lose their freedom. Their idea of a Christian was following rules. This is the basic idea unbelievers have about Christians. It is a lie. They do not understand that being a servant of righteousness is true freedom.

My choice is to walk in freedom from sin and to be a slave of righteousness. My goal is purity, righteousness, and holiness. My goal is to be a servant of righteousness.

6:19-22

Paul wrote in human terms so they could understand. What Paul saw in revelation from the Lord was probably more than he expressed but he could only teach these Christians at a certain level because of where they were at. He condescended to teach them at the level they were at instead of speaking over their head. This showed his motive was for their benefit and not to build up himself.

When men follow after self they go from iniquity to iniquity. This describes an ever worsening situation for the unbeliever. They do not stay static in a condition of unbelief and sin but increase in iniquity. Living in this manner results in a certain outcome. Paul called this "fruit". Paul said the fruit of the sinful life results in shame. The fruit is shameful. The end result of the unbeliever's life is death. It all ends in death. It is meaningless.

However, a life set free from sin and devoted in service to God results in a much different outcome. This fruit is holiness. It is wholesome and good and pure. It is of good report. The end result of a life lived in service to God is everlasting life.

There are two distinct paths in life. One path is the broad road to destruction. This path is filled with a shameful outcome. It ends in eternal death which is separation from God.

The other path is a life of faith in Christ Jesus. This life results in holiness with the outcome of eternal life. At the end of this earthly life there is eternal life and fellowship with God.

Why do men choose death? Why do men choose separation from God? It is because men love self. They are worshipers of self and controlled by sin which blinds them in unbelief.

Paul described the sad condition of unbelievers. Ephesians 4:17-19, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." This is truly a sad condition to live in.

The believer's life is completely opposite of this. His mind is engaged with what is eternal, his understanding is filled with light, he is in close fellowship with God and his heart is filled with the revelation of Jesus Christ. He is sensitive to the Holy Spirit and quick to deny self, take up the cross, and obey the Lord Jesus.

6:23

This bible verse is used a lot in evangelism. It is part of a witnessing outline called "The Romans Road" which also includes Romans 3:23 and Romans 10:9-10, 13. With these verses it is easy to share a basic outline of biblical salvation.

We can see in this verse a contrast between death and life. Here again we are given a choice of either death or life. It has always interested me that death is tied in with wages whereas life is tied in with a gift.

When I think of wages I think of a job. I punch the time clock, put in my day of work, and at the end of the time period I expect to be paid wages. This is how the world system works. The problem is when people attempt to apply this same idea of earning wages to their relationship with God.

In one sense God is our employer. Colossians 3:23-24 make it clear we should do our job as working for the Lord, not for men, because the Lord rewards us. Let us not confuse rewards with salvation. That is another mistake people make.

Salvation cannot be earned like a wage. People still try to do this. They work really hard to do good things, improve their life, get rid of flaunted sin like alcoholism or drug addiction. All that is well and good but it does not earn salvation. We cannot expect to do good works and earn a ticket into heaven.

Why is this? For one thing, it would be a slap in the face of what the Lord Jesus did by dying on a cross. Before Jesus went to the cross he spent an agonizing night praying to the heavenly Father and asking if there was any other way that this cup of pain could pass from him. Nevertheless, he submitted his will to God's plan of saving mankind. Why? Because there is no other way for man to be saved. There is no other way to redeem mankind except through what Jesus Christ did in his death, burial, and resurrection.

Also, God will not be in debt to man. Man can not do anything to make God indebted. God is the giver of everything. He created the universe and he created mankind. We have nothing really we can offer to God.

Why do we think doing good works cancels out sin we did in the past? This does not even work in a human court of justice. We cannot persuade a judge not to sentence us if we are guilty of a crime by reasoning with him about the good things we have done. I'm not saying it won't get a man a lighter sentence if he has done a lot of good, but the good works cannot cancel out the crime. A guilty conviction requires a sentence. However, even though a human judge might be swayed in his emotion by a criminal's humble plea, God will not be. God cannot be just if he lets sinners get away with their crimes. The entire universe would fall apart if God did this.

However, because Jesus took the penalty of our sins, God will justify any man who puts his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In this way God can be just and also the justifier of the sinner. He has made a way to reconcile us to himself through the work of the Son of God.

The attitude that since we did good works we therefore deserve God's mercy does not work. The wages of sin demand God's wrath and punishment. God's judgment upon sin is death. Every man who is born into this world will die physically. It is appointed to men to die once and after this God's judgment. (Hebrews 9:27)

The good news is this: forgiveness and eternal life is a free gift. God does not want any man to die in his sins. It is not God's will for anyone to perish in their sins. Instead, he offers the free gift of eternal life through his Son Jesus Christ. Any man who rejects this free offer of eternal life is insane. Unbelief makes men insane. Pride makes men insane. Just like the devil. Insane.

Let us choose life today. Today is the day of salvation. Let us not choose to go our own way in unbelief. Instead, let us humble our hearts, confess to God, and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Wretched Man – Chapter 7

7:1-4

Paul directed his attention to those who knew the law. This probably meant he addressed Jewish people within the Christian church. He taught them the Christian interpretation of God's law by using principles in God's law. From this we see the truth that all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is useful for teaching. Read 2 Timothy 3:16.

Paul used the example of how in the framework of God's law a married woman was bound to her husband as long as he was alive. However, if her husband died then she was no longer bound by this law of marriage. The death of her husband made the law of marriage irrelevant in her new situation.

In the same way, through the death of Jesus Christ we were set free from the law of God. I wish more people in the church could understand this. Paul taught that Christians were no longer bound to the law of God. The purpose of God's law was to show the exceeding sinfulness of mankind. The law of God did not give men righteousness, but only served to condemn men in their sins.

The death of Christ Jesus on the cross makes the law of God irrelevant to the Christian's situation. As Paul demonstrated this did not make the Christian a law breaker but introduced a new way of living in righteousness. When Christ died we died with him and the law of God no longer applies to us. God's law does not apply to someone who is dead. A dead man cannot break God's law.

When we were raised together with Christ in resurrection we received a new way of life. We now fulfill the righteousness of God's law by living in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works through the Christian who abides in the finished, completed work of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit honors the man who rests completely in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He honors him by filling him with his presence and delivering him from the influence of sin and death.

We bring forth fruit because we live by the power of Jesus Christ who dwells in us. We no longer are called law breakers even though we are dead to the law. We are alive to God because we were raised together with Christ. We now live by the power of the Holy Spirit.

He abides in us, making us holy, sanctifying us, and preparing us as a bride for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

7:5-6

The phrase "when we were in the flesh" points back to the "old man" in Romans 6:6, Ephesians 4:22, and Colossians 3:9. "In the flesh" is a description of living for self, self-worship, and self-love. It is manifested by pride.

When we live according to the old man, or the flesh, then we have the motion of sins working through us. The power of sin courses through our lives when we live according to the principle of self-worship. This motion of sin is inflamed and brought into sharp contrast by God's law. The result of living according to sin, self, the flesh, or the old man is an outcome of death. Our fruit is death. The result is death.

Now, however, since God united us together with his Son Jesus Christ we are dead to the law. When Christ died we died with him and we died to the law. The law is no longer our master. It was only a teacher to bring us to Jesus Christ. It existed to show us how helpless in sin we were.

Now that we believe the gospel and are united with Christ in death and burial and resurrection we no longer live under God's law. The law of God does not apply to us. In this new creation of life we are no longer driven by self-worship, but instead we worship the one true God Jesus Christ.

Now we live according to the Spirit. We serve God in the power of the Holy Spirit because we believe and abide in the gospel. Men are always servants. We are either servants of self and sin, or we are servants of the Lord Jesus. There is no in-between. Serving self is slavery to sin and Satan. If a man does not believe the gospel he is by default worshiping self.

Serving in the newness of the Spirit enables us to live in freedom from the principle of self. We no longer interpret the world around us from a self-centered filter. Instead, we are enabled to have compassion, empathy, and serve others. The Holy Spirit expresses the life of Jesus Christ through us. We are vessels of honor and instruments of righteousness in God's hands.

We do not serve God according to the oldness of the letter. Many people who are sincere become confused about serving God according to the letter instead of in the newness of the Spirit. If you serve God according to the letter instead of the Spirit you experience consistent moral failure in your life. You battle with sins over and over and do not find freedom.

You can only be free from besetting sins by resting in the completed, finished work of Christ. This is the newness of the Spirit. Amen.

7:7-13

What happens when you put a vile murderer in the room with someone who is of utmost honorable character? You see a stark contrast between the two. It is easier to see the disgusting quality of the criminal when you put him beside the heroic, honorable man. What is happening is that a clear contrast has been made. But in the end both of these men are only men. The best of men are at their best men.

However, what happens when you compare a vile criminal with the holy God? Now the quality of the criminal becomes exceedingly vile and disgusting. In comparison with the perfection of God we cannot even bear to look upon the criminal.

Paul said God's law was how the Lord God revealed himself. He is perfect in every way. He is holy. However, the presence of the law did not remove the corruption in men. It only brings it in stark contrast. We see our sin clearly when we put ourselves in the light of God's law.

The law is holy, righteous, and good. However, men are controlled by the power of sin. By the presence of God's law men see clearly their sinful lives. The law is good, but men are sinful. The purpose of God's law is to demonstrate the contrast between the perfection of God and the sinfulness of mankind.

It is this law which acts as a teacher pointing us to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only in Christ that we can receive the righteousness which is by faith in the Son of God.

Galatians 3:24-25, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."

7:14-25

A clue to understanding this passage is to notice how many times Paul spoke in the first person "I". He is constantly pointing to himself.

Perhaps Paul did this on purpose, and if not, it still serves the purpose of this text to recognize self-worship is the essence of sin. The power of sin working in us is our bent towards self-worship, self-image, and self-love. This is the body of death. Self worship is death. It is a black hole, a bottomless abyss, and will suck a person right out into the outer darkness of eternity. Self-worship separates us from the living God.

Paul's struggle was with the power of sin within self, in what he calls the "body of death". I take this in a literal and in the sense of a metaphor. The body of death represents all of man which is independent and separate from God. It represents all the motion of sin within self which drives us further and further away from faith in the living God.

It is also literal, in that we exist in a body drawn downward by inevitable death, decay, and corruption. There is no escape from the curse of death while we exist in this temporary house of clay. Read 2 Corinthians 5:4. Who saves us from this body of death? Jesus Christ abolished death and rose again the third day. Read 2 Timothy 1:10.

When we trust in him and put our faith in him then God unites us together with the Lord Jesus. We are one with the Lord Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection. Because he overcame death and the grave we also have overcome. At the last day we will see God in resurrected bodies. Read Job 19:25-26.

Spirit Filled Life – Chapter 8

8:1

This chapter contains profound promises and deserves to be memorized and meditated upon as often as possible. We have learned in the book of Romans that man is a sinner and is worthy of God's condemnation. God made a way through his Son Jesus Christ for men to be reconciled to God. He made it possible through the Lord Jesus for God to be just and also justify sinners.

We have learned that all men are under sin. The purpose of God's law is to show how exceedingly sinful we are. Men are either slaves to sin or slaves to righteousness. Men who put their faith in Jesus Christ are slaves of righteousness leading to holiness with the result of eternal life.

All this is the work of God from first to last. The righteous man lives by faith and does not depend upon obeying God's law to earn righteousness. The righteous man lives by faith in the Son of God Jesus Christ.

We learned God placed the believer into Christ Jesus and united him together with the Lord Jesus in death, burial, and resurrection. We were delivered from sin, self, the world, and the devil. We are no longer slaves to sin but are now servants of God.

As we look at Romans chapter 8 we learn the secret of the victorious Christian life is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit applies the truth of what Jesus accomplished to the believer's life. He causes the man who believes and abides in the gospel to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh.

There is therefore now no condemnation for the man who is in Christ Jesus. This man is no longer a worshiper of self and does not walk in agreement with the old man, the flesh, and the body of death. No, instead he walks in agreement with the truth in the gospel. As a result he is no longer under any condemnation. He does not trust in himself, but trusts completely in what the Lord Jesus did for him and what the Holy Spirit does through him.

The Holy Spirit works in the life of this man because he is in Christ. God the Father places the believer into Christ (1 Corinthians 1:30), and accounts what Christ did to the believer. We receive the righteousness of Christ by faith. The Father counts it, the Lord Jesus accomplished it, and the Holy Spirit applies it to the believer.

From first to last, all of the work was done by God. What part does a Christian do in all of this? The Christian believes the gospel. The work of the Christian is to believe the gospel and abide in the gospel day after day. Today is the day of salvation. Every day he believes. He does not depart from the gospel. He continues to trust in Jesus with simple, child-like faith. In this way, he topples the power of sin, destroys the work of the devil, and overcomes the system of the world.

How does a man get this? How does a man get in Christ? Believe the gospel. Jesus died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)

8:2

The word "law" was not used in the sense of a human legal framework. This was not talking about law in the sense of morality as in right or wrong. Instead, the word "law" here was used in the sense of a principle which can be relied on to be consistent. Thinking in terms of mathematics might help. There are rules in math that do not change. It is not a matter of right or wrong. The laws in math just are. They are invisible principles which we can understand but which also exist outside of the mind. They are true even if we did not understand them or believe in them. Math is real in this sense and so are the "laws" which Paul described here.

There were two laws mentioned. One was the law of the Spirit of life, and the other law was sin and death. We are familiar with thinking in terms of right and wrong but what we have here are not two opposing forces. The law of the Spirit of life is actually much greater and more powerful than the law of sin and death. We know this because the Spirit of God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

We are trained to think that the ultimate power in this world is death. No one has power over death. No one can escape death. However, someone did overcome death. His name is Jesus Christ. He abolished death! He arose from the dead and now lives in a body which will never die again. He died once and

will never die again. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is much stronger and more powerful than the law of sin and death.

How do we get the law of the Spirit of life to work in us? Any sane man would want to receive eternal life. Who in their right mind would want to be subject to the law of sin and death? But men do. Men prefer to live according to the law of sin and death. For most people it is much easier to never believe in the Lord Jesus and to live in whatever way they see fit. The life of unbelief is a life controlled by the law of sin and death. Every man who denies the gospel of Jesus Christ is controlled and enslaved by sin and death. This law works in their body, controls their mind, and tells them how to live their life on this earth.

A man who believes the gospel of Jesus Christ is controlled by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit works through the life of the believer in Christ. The man who believes the gospel walks in the Spirit. He is controlled by the Holy Spirit. When we live according to the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus we are no longer enslaved to the law of sin and death.

These laws are real whether or not we acknowledge them, understand them, or believe in them.

If a man said he did not believe a moving vehicle could touch him and went and stood out in the middle of a highway his belief would not stop a car from hitting him. Our beliefs do not determine reality. Reality is determined by truth and the one who is truth is Jesus Christ. He is the way, the truth, and the life. He is reality. He is truth.

Believe the truth. Do not agree with the lie. When we do not believe the gospel then we believe lies. We will automatically believe lies when we no longer believe the gospel.

Believing in the gospel results in a man being controlled by the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Believing lies will result in a man being controlled by the law of sin and death. This is how the world was created by God. This is how man was created by God.

8:3-4

In verse 2 we looked at two laws: the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and also the law of sin and death.

In verse 3 another law was mentioned, and this law was the moral law God gave through Moses. This included the ten commandments and all the religious, judicial, and societal laws given to Israel. This entire package of law could not do something. It could not make people righteous. Why? Not because there was anything wrong with God's law but because men are weak in their sinful flesh.

What is God's remedy for the sin of man? God's law was not the remedy. God's law was the doctor who gave the diagnosis of sin. The remedy is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the remedy for our sins.

God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin and so he condemned the sin in men's flesh. The Lord Jesus put his finger on the true problem of man and that is his sin.

Through Christ Jesus the righteousness of God's law is fulfilled in us. We do not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead.

We no longer follow self but now put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. When we believe the gospel of the Lord Jesus then we walk in the Spirit. When a man does not believe the gospel he walks according to the flesh. Unbelief is walking in the flesh and has a distinct outcome. Faith in the Lord Jesus is walking in the Spirit and has distinct, identifiable result in a man's life.

A man who believes in the Lord Jesus will see the righteousness of God's law fulfilled through him by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit operates in the life of a man who believes the gospel. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

The fulfillment of the law is accomplished in us because we believe the gospel and the Holy Spirit operates on the basis of the finished, completed work of Christ Jesus.

The righteousness of God's law is fulfilled in the man who believes in the Lord Jesus. God gives this man the righteousness of Christ and this righteousness is made manifest through the man's life as he keeps his eyes fixed on Jesus. Jesus is the author and the finisher of our faith.

8:5-8

Paul made a contrast between life and death, the flesh and the Spirit, between those who believe and those who do not believe. Those who do not believe engage in self-worship; those who believe the gospel walk in the Spirit and worship the living God.

If a man walks in unbelief he is "after the flesh". This means his mind is focused on himself. He thinks continually about everything related to satisfying his need, desires, or lusts. He is consumed with the self-life. This is how the unbeliever lives.

Jesus described the mind-set of the unbeliever. Matthew 6:31-32, "*Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*"

The word "Gentiles" described people outside the faith. This described those who did not believe and instead lived according to the world system. Their mind is set upon eating, drinking, clothing, and business. This is what they think about every day. They that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh. Unbelievers rely upon self for provision and protection. They are their own prize. They worship self.

The believer is not like this. For the Christian the Lord is the provider, protection, and prize. He worships the living God. Those who are after the Spirit have their mind set upon the things of the Spirit. To live with a carnal mind is death. Self-worship is death.

It is like a star in the universe which implodes upon itself and becomes a black hole. This is a good example of the soul dedicated to self. It is like a star which implodes and sucks everything into itself and dies. This is a picture of death. To be carnally minded is death. To put self first is death. To rely

upon self is death. Men today make self reliance a virtue, but this is the world system's inversion of the truth. Self reliance is not a virtue. It is a curse.

The carnal mind is an enemy of God. It does not believe in God and therefore has no point of reference except it's own self. This is what self worship is all about. Self worship is relativism. There is no outside point of reference for the soul which does not believe in God.

Men like this make a career their god, they make their families their god, they make philosophy or man-made systems of religion their god. They even make bible doctrines their god.

However, the carnal mind is an enemy of the living God. The carnal mind is not subject to God's law and neither can be. These are the ones upon whom the curse of God's law falls. The law was made for the rebel and the self-worshiping man. A man who has a carnal mind cannot please God.

There is only one way to please God. The Bible tells us how we can please God. Read Hebrews 11:6 and John 6:27-29.

Are Christians supposed to work? Of course they work! However, Christians do not make the goal of their life provision and protection. The goal of the Christian is to obey the Holy Spirit. We are salt and light. Our purpose is not to obtain provision and protection. If we do this we end up worshiping self and are filled with pride, prestige, and position. This makes us into idolaters and covetous with the result of living an immoral life. God's purpose for the Christian is to live as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. We are not our own. We are servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Colossians 3:23-24) Do not adopt the mindset of the world around you. Christians have a much different attitude towards life, family, work, and relationships. (Romans 12:2)

8:9-11

Be careful when you read the word "flesh" to see what context Paul used it in. When he said "ye are not in the flesh" he did not mean someone left their physical body. He did not mean the body was dead and there was a spirit walking around. The "flesh" describes the sum total attitude of unbelief and independence from the living God. When he said "ye are not in the flesh" he described the man who believed the gospel. When we believe the gospel we are not in the flesh anymore. We are in the Spirit when we believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Notice he says "if" the Spirit of God dwell in you. Under what circumstances would the Spirit of God not dwell in a man? If a man is not a Christian then the Spirit of God does not dwell in him. If a man does not believe the gospel then the Spirit of God does not live in him. The Holy Spirit lives inside the man who believes the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is summarized by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

As a Christian our body dies. Our physical bodies die and go back to dust. Our bodies die because of the sin which lives in the physical make up of mankind. However, when a man believes the gospel his spirit comes to life. A man is spirit, soul, and body. This is similar to the tabernacle of outer court, inner court, and most holy place. When we believe in Jesus the Holy Spirit lives in our spirit. Our spirit is made alive. This is what Jesus described as "born again". We are born once of our mother in the flesh; we are born the second time by the Holy Spirit.

If Christ is in us our body will die because of sin. It is in the process of death. Even though our body dies we look forward to a future when the Holy Spirit will make our body alive again. Our body will be resurrected in the future. For believers this is called the "first resurrection". The second resurrection will be for unbelievers who stand before God's white throne of judgment.

He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal body. The word "quicken" means to resurrect or make alive. The Holy Spirit will resurrect our body like the Lord Jesus was resurrected. The Holy Spirit lives in the Christian and in the future will raise him up from the dead. 1 Corinthians 15:51-54, "*Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*"

8:12-13

The word debtor is another word for slave. A debtor is someone who is a slave to a creditor. We are no longer slaves to the flesh. We do not owe the old man, the flesh, the carnal nature. We are not indebted to live in the manner as the rest of the world system.

Unbelief and a carnal attitude leads to death. This is not just physical death. Death is the darkness of that imploding star I mentioned earlier. Spiritual death is separation from the life which comes from God. Life is what gives meaning, purpose, and structure. Imagine a world without light, without time, without clocks, calendars, purpose, or direction. That is just the beginning of what hell is like. That is the death which a man who lives in unbelief progresses toward. This is what a life of flesh and carnality leads to.

A life lived in the Spirit is a life of faith in Christ Jesus. A life in the Spirit is believing in the gospel of Jesus Christ. A life in the Spirit is resting in the finished, completed work of the Lord Jesus in death, burial, and resurrection. We simply believe the gospel and rest in what the Lord Jesus did for us. The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus works in us and through us.

The Holy Spirit enables us to deny the deeds of the body of death. In other words, the Holy Spirit living in us gives us the ability to live contrary to the downward pull of sin. We no longer follow after self-interest as our primary goal. Our primary goal now is seeking the kingdom of God.

We know through God's word that the Lord provides for and protects us. We are not motivated primarily for self in everything. Instead, we want to seek the interests of the Lord. This is the work the Holy Spirit does through us. In this way we mortify the deeds of the body. The body is dedicated to self-preservation, self-provision, and self-worship. When we walk in the Spirit the body is subject to the spirit and mind. We are no longer controlled by the carnal nature but are controlled by truth, righteousness, and holiness. In this way, we live. We truly live when we walk in the Spirit. We truly live now and even more we will live in our resurrected bodies. Read Proverbs 4:18.

8:14

How does a man know if he is led by the Spirit of God? This is important because those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. If a man is not led by the Holy Spirit he is not a son of God.

Being a son of God does not imply godhood or equivalence to "the" Son of God Jesus Christ. Christians are not gods with a little "g". I know this is a popular heresy in mega churches. It is heresy. Christians and men in general are not gods. The scripture the false prophets use to justify this heresy are taken out of context. They twist the meaning of the text.

I want to focus on making sure we are led by the Spirit of God. Basically men are led in two different, opposing directions. Let us think a minute what it means for a man not to be led by the Holy Spirit. What does a man follow if he does not follow the Holy Spirit?

A man who does not follow the Holy Spirit relies on himself. He might be a brilliant man with high intelligence and puts his trust in his abilities to navigate the maze of the world system. He does what comes natural. What comes natural to men is to provide for themselves, protect themselves, and prize their own life above the life of others. This is how the natural mind of a man thinks, believes, and behaves. This is the attitude of the world system. This mindset comes directly from Satan who is the original self-worshiper.

Another mark of a man not led by the Holy Spirit is a routine attitude of unbelief. This man does not think about God. If the subject arises he may have a memorized response to it. The response is usually shallow and dismissive. The unbeliever gets his set of memorized responses from the world system.

Consider a man who is led by the Spirit. This man is completely different from the man who has the attitude of the world system. The man led by the Spirit believes the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is at the heart of who he is in life. He believes the gospel. He did not just believe the gospel in the past. Believing in the gospel is not walking an aisle in a church, or being baptized, or taking communion. Believing the gospel is an every day active momentum toward the Lord Jesus Christ. His heart, mind, and thoughts are intertwined with the word of God.

He probably can remember a definite point in his personal history where he went from unbelief to knowing Jesus Christ was real. For some this transition was dramatic. For others it was not as dramatic but nonetheless definite.

This experience was a turning point. He continues to touch the Lord each day. He believes the gospel every day. He is united with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection every day by faith. He knows God placed him in Christ and the Holy Spirit works out this reality through him.

A man led by the Holy Spirit does not necessarily appear to be spiritual from the outside. You don't see a halo shining around his brow. He does not glow in the dark. He is a simple man, living a practical life, but in his heart he interprets everything through the filter of God's word. He is obsessed with the truth of Jesus Christ. Not a day goes by where his heart is not drawn to thinking about the Lord Jesus Christ.

The man led by the Spirit hears the Lord's voice. A Christian must hear God speaking to him. Scriptures tell us the Lord's sheep hear his voice and follow him. They will not follow a stranger. (John 10:27)

Someone led by the Spirit has a spiritual gift he uses to edify and build up others. Paul listed these spiritual gifts. (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 1 Corinthians 12:28) A man led by the Holy Spirit will have specific character traits which others can see in his life. Read Galatians 5:22-23.

It is possible to counterfeit spiritual gifts. It is possible for moral men to imitate the fruits of the Spirit. However, one thing the devil's impostors cannot do: live a life of freedom from self, sin, the world, and the devil. This can only be done by the man who completely rests in the finished, completed work of Jesus Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection.

8:15

The unbeliever is a prisoner to fear. He may not realize this. He might not get up in the morning trembling. He may not go to bed at night afraid. But his life is defined by one single fear: the dread of his own demise. Everything he does is an attempt to put this fact out of his mind. He works all day, enjoys entertainment, fills his life with as much as he can. He does not want to consider the end of his life. All the activity and exertion is so he can deny the truth. His life is brief. It is temporary. As a result he builds a prison for himself. It is a prison of idolatry, unbelief, lies, delusions. This chain gets stronger the longer he persists in the lie.

When a man turns to God and puts his faith in the Lord Jesus these chains are broken. The man who trusts in the Lord Jesus is adopted into God's family. He can cry out to God "Abba, Father". This is an emotional phrase of love which a son or daughter cries out to their daddy. Daddy! Father! The prison of fear is gone because he knows he will live forever in God's family. He is no longer running out of time. Instead, he can take time and invest it in what will count in eternity. He invests himself in the kingdom of God. His goal is to promote the name of the Lord Jesus. He does not promote his own name. Instead, he denies himself, he takes up his cross, and he follows Jesus.

Jesus died so we could live. He rose again so that we could join him in his kingdom. A man of God also lays down his life in order that others may be saved by the Lord Jesus.

We are no longer a prisoner. The power of Satan was broken. We no longer follow the lies of the enemy. Instead, we believe the truth in Jesus and are set free. We are free to do what is right and to walk in the light of God's love.

8:16-17

The Holy Spirit is not an "it" as the KJV translators described him. This is one technical detail I always have a hard time with. When I read this verse I change "itself" to "himself" because the Holy Spirit truly is a person and not an "it".

The Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. He speaks to us in our heart that we belong to God. We were adopted by God and belong to him because of the completed work of Christ Jesus. We can cry out to God "Abba, Father", which means Daddy! Father!

If we are God's children we are heirs. An heir is a child who inherits something from his parent. God is our Father and made his children heirs. We will receive a reward and an inheritance. Scripture makes it clear that Christians are destined to receive an inheritance in God's kingdom. However, we need to also be aware that even though we cannot lose our justification (salvation) it is possible to lose rewards at the judgment seat of Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10). It is true we cannot undo our justification in Christ Jesus. That was completely accomplished by the Lord Jesus. However, we can diminish our reward. Read Revelation 3:11. Keep in mind that no man can take our salvation from us. What is in view is not salvation but rewards for faithfulness. Read Matthew 25:21.

Becoming a joint heir with Christ means receiving responsibility. Our reward is the Lord himself and participating in what God planned for eternity. Let us press on to take hold upon all the Lord has prepared for us. Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily besets us. Instead, let us look unto Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith. Now is not the time to be lazy or slacking in God's purpose for our lives. Instead, we need to be zealous for the Lord and make the most of every opportunity. Let us redeem the time while we still have time left.

8:18

There is so much in this excerpt from Romans chapter 8. Suffering in this present time is part of the Christian life. Suffering is not everything the Christian life consists of but it is a part. In any doctrine we teach there needs to be an acknowledgment of the fallen world we live in. The Christian life is not abstract. It is lived in a real world with real fallen people. In this world we have tribulation. We experience trouble, suffering, and sorrow. This is the life which we now have in this world we live in.

However, Paul glimpsed the world which is coming. He said that what he glimpsed so far surpasses anything we can imagine that whatever sufferings we endure now are not worthy to be compared. All the pain, suffering, or sorrow of this present world pales in comparison.

Notice how Paul does not speak of heaven or the world to come specifically but instead pointed to something he described as "the glory which shall be revealed in us". I think what this points to is our receiving a resurrected body. When we receive a resurrected body we will be fitted with everything we need to worship and serve God throughout all of eternity.

This glory will be revealed in us. The Lord has put within the believer a glory which shall be revealed in eternity. This is not something that will be created but something which exists within us but is not apparent. It will be revealed in us. Have you ever felt like there was something within you like this? Have you ever sensed a glory of God living in you and through you?

Paul did not ignore the present reality of our human condition but he pointed to a much greater reality and that was the truth of eternity. In light of eternity, what we experience now is only light afflictions. Read 2 Corinthians 4:17-18.

8:19-23

The entire creation waits for Christians to receive their resurrected bodies. The entire creation was subjected to vanity because of the sin of man. However, when redeemed men receive their resurrected bodies then creation itself will also be set free. Especially in bible prophecy describing the millennial kingdom of the Lord Jesus we can see creation itself set free from the effect of the downward pull of

sin. These prophecies of God's kingdom on earth describe animal life acting in accordance to the knowledge of the Lord. Read Isaiah 11:6-9.

Creation itself will be delivered from corruption when the children of God are revealed in their resurrected bodies. This demonstrates there is a link between the earth and man. What man did in the Garden of Eden not only affected himself but affected the natural world. I do not think we yet comprehend what we will be able to accomplish under God's direction when we receive our resurrected bodies. I am certainly excited at the thought of being delivered from this body of sin and death. I look forward to receiving a new body which will never grow old, never get sick, and never die.

The Lord redeems our soul but also redeems our body. He justified us, he sanctifies us, and he will glorify us as well. The glory of God will be revealed through believers when they receive a body like the Lord Jesus Christ. In those eternal bodies we will be able to be in God's presence and worship and serve him forever.

This is a great hope to look forward to. No suffering or trouble in this life can compare to what God has in store for us in eternity. Let us put our temporary life here in perspective. We might be discouraged at times but let us never give in to despair. We have a glorious future awaiting us.

8:24-25

Most of the Christian life is about what will be fulfilled when we receive our resurrection body. Until then we continue to put one foot in front of the next because we live in hope. Paul made a point that a man does not hope for what he already has. A Christian does not already have everything he will have in eternity. Knowing what waits for us we patiently wait. This also works for us and builds in us the character of Christ. The Lord is also patiently waiting for his bride and the fulness of his kingdom on the earth.

The enemy offered the Lord Jesus the kingdoms of the earth. He offered him a shortcut to what he knew the Lord Jesus would eventually inherit from the Father. In a similar manner the enemy can tempt us to lose heart and get our eyes off the hope before us.

This is where patient waiting comes in. We must learn the Christian life is not about instant gratification. Everything in culture urges people to fulfill desires immediately. Instant gratification is constantly promoted. People become impatient if they have to wait a few minutes for something.

A Christian needs to learn patience. This is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit which the Lord wants to bring forth in our lives. Read Galatians 5:22-23.

Another word for patience is longsuffering. This means we endure the long wait for our resurrected bodies. Do not settle for what the world offers in temporary gratification but instead deny self, take up the cross, and follow Jesus.

There is also a list from the apostle Peter we need to allow the Holy Spirit to build in our lives. 2 Peter 1:6, "And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;" Patience is necessary in order for us to become perfect and entire wanting nothing. (James 1:4)

We can never become a complete Christian unless we are patient. Look up the word "wait" in the Bible. A lot of life consists in waiting on the Lord for answers to prayers, for instruction, and to be led by the Holy Spirit. An impatient man like King Saul forced himself and did not trust the Lord. A man of faith receives grace to wait patiently for God's answer. Read the exhortation from Hebrews 12:1.

8:26-27

The Holy Spirit is a helper who comes alongside the Christian to teach, instruct, guide, and to pray through us. It may sound odd that the Holy Spirit can pray through a Christian. I won't try to explain it, either, because it is not something which can be understood intellectually but rather through experience. Some things in the Christian life must be experienced to be understood.

He helps us because we are weak. We live in weak bodies and many times do not know how we should pray. We do not know how we ought to pray for people, situations, or problems. We can always say, "Lord, your will be done in this person's life, in this situation, with this problem." However, there are times the Holy Spirit prays through us. The situation may be too heavy to put into words. We might be so burdened we cannot speak but even through groanings the Spirit prays through us.

The Holy Spirit knows what needs to be done. When we yield completely to the Lord the Spirit of God intercedes through us. He makes intercession for us according to God's will.

Remember **Proverbs 3:5**, "*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*" There is a time when we pray according to our understanding but there is another time when we do not know how to pray. The Lord intercedes for us and through us. At present the Lord intercedes for us. The Bible says he lives to make intercession for us. (Hebrews 7:25). Let us yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. He lives in us and he is able to pray and intercede when we are at the end of our understanding. He prays through us when we can not utter words but only groan in the spirit. Read John 11:33-34.

8:28

Romans 8:28 is a precious verse in the Bible to me. I don't know when I learned this verse but it was early in my life. I read the verse and understood it and knew I had to memorize it. This is one of those Bible verses every Christian needs to memorize. I think we should memorize this verse and meditate on it every day. There is comfort and encouragement in this verse. This one verse is like a cannon ball which can dismantle the lies of the devil.

Let's think about what this verse means. We know! We know. There is no guessing. There is an absolute truth which we can depend on. As surely as the sun rises and sets, as surely as there is a moon, a sun, and stars. As surely as there is air to breathe, deserts, mountains, rivers, and an ocean. We know. God does not hide the truth from us. He revealed the truth to us in his Son Jesus Christ.

We know all things work together for good for them who love God. Every good decision, every bad decision, every success, every failure, every advance movement, every retreat in life. Every single thing in life is material God uses. He takes all things and works it together for my good!

The Christian cannot lose. No matter what the world says, no matter how many accusations the devil levels against us, no matter how hard life is, we can never lose. God takes everything in our life and

uses it. Like a potter works the clay every bit of the dirt in our life is taken and transformed by God into something good.

I do not have to regret my past. I do not need to wish that I had done this or that in the past. God is able right now to take every detail and work it together for good. This is how much God loves me. God is my creator, he is my maker, and every detail of my life is in his hands.

He knows me when I get up in the morning, and he knows me when I go to bed at night. He knows the thoughts that I think and the words I speak. Before a word is on my tongue he already knows it completely. He has beset me behind and before and has laid his hand upon me. My life is completely in the hands of God almighty. Read Psalm 139.

God is determined that no matter how bad I messed up he will turn it around for good in the end. The end product of my life is what God has in mind. He sees the blueprint of my life, and there is absolutely nothing I can do to thwart the piece of art he is creating.

My heart's desire is to believe God, to work with him, and to cooperate with him. One way or another he will have his way. I am happy about this. I am content with God's dealing in my life. Because I know he loves me and he will only do what is good for me.

He has a purpose for my life. He is carrying out this purpose. He has called me according to his own purpose.(2 Timothy 1:9) You see that? God had a plan for me before the world was created. He knows every bird that falls from the sky. He has clothed the grass of the field. He knows me. (Job 23:10)

I can rest in him today. I know he has a good plan for my life. His plan is good and not evil. His plan is to give me a future and hope. (Jeremiah 29:11). I am confident that the good work he started in me will be carried on until he completes it on the day he returns. (Philippians 1:6)

What rest, what peace, what joy I have today by believing this promise in God's word. My heart rejoices in God my savior! The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knows those who trust in him. (Nahum 1:7)

I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord is at work. My life is in the Lord Jesus Christ. I have nothing to be afraid of. The Lord will complete his work in me. He will carry it on to completion. I have hope for the future and I have no regrets about the past. My past is under the blood of Jesus Christ. I am forgiven, I am redeemed, and I will live forever with the Lord.

8:29-30

God knew everything before it happened. He knew who would believe in him. God chose those whom he foreknew would believe in him. I like the attitude of the Psalmist in Psalm 131:1, "*LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.*"

There are two thoughts surrounding the "conformed to the image of his Son", and also "firstborn among many brethren".

God's ultimate purpose for believers is that we be conformed to the image of his son Jesus Christ. We see this clearly in Romans 8:29. We are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son. This is God's purpose for us. When we understand this and use the knowledge of this to interpret what happens in our life we will have peace. We will be encouraged even if hardship comes because we understand through faith in God's word that our Father is conforming us to the image of his Son Jesus.

With this knowledge we are equipped to withstand temptation, endure trials, and to have a proper perspective on relationships. Just this one bible principle of knowing God's purpose can radically change our goals in life. It will give us courage and enable us to be bold in the face of the enemy. It delivers us from fear. We can proclaim with Daniel's three friends that even if God does not deliver us we will not bow to the false god of this world. We maintain our present course because God is at work in our lives to conform us to the image of his Son.

This is God's purpose and it is his plan. When we keep this in our mind it helps us interpret life with a biblical framework of thinking. We will not be self-centered but instead Christ-centered in our decisions.

Let's think about this: firstborn among many brethren. What does that mean? Jesus is the firstborn from the dead. He was the first of many brethren to receive a resurrection body. Christians are brothers of the Lord. We are his spiritual family. This is what he told his disciples during his earthly ministry. He elevated his spiritual family above his physical relatives. He said those who obeyed God were his real family. They are his real family because they will be with him forever.

Father God will have many brothers for his son the Lord Jesus. This work is going on today. Every time someone hears the gospel and believes he becomes one of these many brothers. Jesus is the firstborn among many brothers.

8:31

What can we say in light of the facts the Holy Spirit gave us in this chapter? God is working all things together for the good of those who love him. God has called us by his own purpose and grace and takes everything in our lives to bring us where we need to get to. His purpose is for us to be conformed to the image of his firstborn Son Jesus Christ.

What is our reply? We should be bold and proclaim that since God is for us then nobody can be against us. There is no power in hell that can prevail against us. There is no one who can defeat the Christian who stands firmly on the completed work of Jesus Christ. We were forgiven, saved, delivered, sanctified, justified, and look forward to being glorified. The enemy cannot stop this from happening. The more he fights the more he helps accelerate the process of our sanctification. There is nothing the enemy can do to separate us from God's love. We are completely secure in Christ.

When a boy has a big brother on the playground he is more confident to move around without fear. He knows his big brother has his back. The bully on the playground will not succeed against him as long as his big brother is there. And scripture says the Lord will never leave us and or forsake us. The Lord Jesus is our big brother. He is the firstborn among many brothers.

Praise God we have the victory. We are not defeated. Allow faith to reach out and grab the victory we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not have anything to be afraid of. We are secure in the Lord. He is our provider. He is our protector. He is our portion forever.

8:32

The Holy Spirit asks the believer reading this verse a question. He asks why we do not believe God will freely give us all things. Why do we think God will not give us all things? He already gave his best. He provided his Son for our salvation. He gave us his best. Why wouldn't he also give us everything else we need?

This is the problem with unbelief. It does not make sense. It is not rational to not believe in a loving God who gives everything we need. Look around at what he created. Look at this beautiful world. Though it is a fallen creation which we live in it is still amazing. There is beauty for the eyes to see, beauty for the ears to hear. When God created the earth he said it was good.

After pondering this question of unbelief I've come to understand that unbelief is man's default attitude. We come into the world as enemies of God. This is part of who we are as humans. When man fell in the Garden of Eden he made an agreement with the liar and his lie. We've been turning our back on God ever since.

The Lord did not give up on us. He did not turn his back on us. He constantly creates situations to turn our heart back to him. He works all things together for our good and his glory.

God did not spare any expense in bringing us back to himself. He gave himself through his son Jesus Christ. The Lord sacrificed himself so that we could be saved, delivered, redeemed, forgiven, justified, sanctified, and glorified. God gave himself. He poured out his life for us. Why would we ever entertain the thought that he won't help us, or provide for us, or protect us?

Israel, in the wilderness, did not believe God would provide for them. They saw God part the Red Sea. They saw the miracles in Egypt. They saw how God brought them out of slavery and into freedom. But they still could not believe he would give them food and water in the desert. Men do not change in this respect. Unbelief is at the heart of our problems.

Our work is to believe in the Son of God. When we believe the gospel and rest completely in the finished work of Christ then we are set free from fear, anxiety, and worry. The Lord is our provider. Philippians 4:19, "*But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*"

8:33-39

No one can condemn someone God justified. God declared us not guilty because of what the Son of God accomplished through crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. God placed us into Christ and counted what Christ accomplished for us. We have received the righteousness of Christ and he took our sin upon himself. No one can condemn us now.

The Lord Jesus continues to intercede for us. He prays for us. I can't really understand what that means but there it is. He intercedes for us.

Nothing can separate us from God's love. There is no tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword which can separate us from God's love. Do we know this? We might know it intellectually but it is another thing altogether to experience this. I can't say I have experienced everything Paul listed here but I get a glimpse of this. I've seen God's love in my life. I've seen God's faithfulness in my life. I am persuaded that nothing will separate me from God's love.

There is nothing in the natural or spiritual world that can separate us from God. His love is eternal. He is our refuge, our fortress, and our strong tower. He is our shield, our defense, our lawyer. He is everything we need to live and overcome.

I am thankful for the encouragement and comfort of Romans chapter 8. There is hardly another chapter which can compare to the height and depth of encouragement we find in this chapter. Remember to store up these promises in your heart. Memorize this chapter and use it when you need it. As you walk with the Lord you will need these promises. You will need it to endure temptations, trials, and all the attack of the enemy. Don't give up and don't be discouraged. God will never leave you or forsake you. He will be with us to the end.

God Is Sovereign – Chapter 9

9:1-5

There is more here than Paul's compassion for Jewish people. We see the heart of God and the heart of the Lord Jesus. Notice the depth of Paul's intercessory passion. This intense intercession does not come from the heart of man but is born out of the heart of God. Moses said something similar to God when he interceded on behalf of Israel. He asked God to blot him out of the book of life. In a sense this was what happened when Jesus went to Calvary. He himself became sin for us. He took upon himself the penalty of sin when he died on the cross.

God's love for Israel is intense. Paul described this love as a "great heaviness and continual sorrow". I believe Paul wrote the book of Hebrews out of this great heaviness and continual sorrow for his fellow Jewish brethren. Paul called Israelites "my brethren". We should remember the Lord Jesus called Jewish people his brethren. I think it is a serious sin when Christians turn their back on Israel or follow doctrines which are dismissive towards Jewish people. We should guard our heart against any doctrine which attempts to plant seeds of hatred towards Israel. This spirit comes from Satan and is inspired in the pit of hell.

The Lord Jesus came into the world in the flesh through Israel. Paul said Jesus the Messiah was a Jew. Jesus told the woman at the well in Samaria that salvation is of the Jews.

A Christian should pray for the peace of Jerusalem and the salvation of Israel. We should always seek to bless Jewish people and bless the nation of Israel. These are the people who received God's word and who preserved God's word. This nation demonstrates God's glory in the earth. This nation is God's prophetic timepiece in the world.

9:6-13

Paul made a distinction between the physical seed of Abraham and the spiritual seed of Abraham. Some people think the church replaced national Israel. This is impossible because the church is not an earthly nation with earthly land inheritance. What Paul pointed to was the difference between the brother of the spirit and the brother of the flesh. One was the children of the flesh, the other was the children of the promise. Those who believe God's promise in regard to the "Seed" are the children of promise. These are the spiritual brothers. Those who believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, the promised Seed foreshadowed by Isaac and Jacob in Paul's teaching are the children of promise. Be clear in your mind that there was always within Israel and within the outward church today those who are children of the promise. There were always those who were of the faith of Abraham and believed the Promise made to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. That promise was about the Seed who would crush the head of the devil. This Seed promise pointed directly to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who believe the gospel (which always existed from the beginning and even before the beginning of creation) are the children of the promise. The children of the promise are overcomers, the remnant, and the bride of Christ. They are those who exist within the outward structure of Israel and now also exist in the outward structure of what people think of as the "church". They are true believers, the spiritual brother, the overcomer, the remnant.

They were not all Israel which were in Israel. This is true today of what people call the "church". They are not all the church who are the church. There is a spiritual brother and there is a brother of the flesh. Many people confess the Lord Jesus but not many people live for him, by him, and walk in him by faith. Those who do are remnant overcomers, the bride, the children of the promise.

When he said "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" he pointed to the reality of the spiritual child of God. Jesus said, "You must be born again." Those who are born of the Spirit are those who believe the promise of God regarding his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. These believers existed in Israel before Christ appeared as a babe in a manger. They existed throughout his life. They existed during his earthly ministry. They were there when he was crucified, when he died, when he was buried, and when he rose from the dead. They were there since he ascended to heaven. These children of promise always were and they always will be. They were, they are, and they shall be. They reflect who God is: who was, and is, and is to come: the great Three In One. God's people are three in one, also. They are Israel, Church, and the Kingdom.

God revealed himself to me as God who is three in one. He is prophet, priest, and king. He reveals himself through Israel, the church, and the nations. In three days (Israel, church, and the kingdom) all will be complete in the New Jerusalem.

Look at the pattern of the spiritual brother and the brother of the flesh in the Bible. It is the same pattern you see in the New Testament with parables such as the wise and foolish virgins and in verses where one is taken and one is left. This is a pattern which begins in Genesis with Adam and Eve's two sons Cain and Abel. You see this in Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob and Esau, Jacob's sons versus Joseph, Saul and David, over and over. It is even in examples like Mary and Martha in the gospels. One rested, one worked. This pattern is repeated. It is prophetic of the outward and inward structure of the house of faith throughout time and history.

9:14-21

It is easy to read this and miss the simple point I think Paul made. God is free. God is free to do whatever he deems is righteous. God is always right, always holy, always perfect in everything he does. God is a real person who makes decisions, choices, and creates everything for us, including us. He is the ultimate Potter over pieces of clay. How can we, then, the clay in his hands, question the Potter? We might question but God is not obligated to explain what he does. How can we understand what he does?

God asked similar questions to Job. Who made the universe? Who made the stars, the sun, the moon, the light, the darkness, the earth, and who made man in his own image?

We need to understand who we are. We are the clay. He is the potter. God is free even if he crush us. If we stumble in our faith it is only because we did not believe in the true God but only in who we thought he was. God is free even if he crush us. This is the lesson of Job. It is the lesson of the Potter and the clay. God can crush us because he is free. When God does something it is always right because He is God.

Men question why one person is saved and another person is damned. Men question the justice of God. Those who question God like this don't really know him. To know God in truth is to be quiet, it is to be humble, it is in trust in his righteousness, his justice, his mercy, his truth. There is no question from the clay when he knows he is clay and God is the Potter. Read Psalm 100:1-5.

9:22-23

When I read these verses what stands out to me is the "what if" statement in this sentence.

What if God? This is a question; it is not a statement. The Holy Spirit asks the reader to consider a question.

The question is this: what if God, with the purpose of demonstrating his wrath and his power, endured with patience vessels designed for destruction.

What if some people enter this world for the purpose of God demonstrating his anger and wrath. The question continues to cover the opposite scenario as well. What if he also made some vessels destined for his mercy in order to glorify his grace and mercy.

What if? We know this is a contrast of extremes because scripture plainly declares in other passages in the Bible that it is not God's will for any man to perish.

Some people read these verses and say God creates some people to go to hell and creates some people to go to heaven. But that is not exactly what the verses say! What does it say? The verse asks a question. It does not make a declarative statement about what God did. No, it asks a question!

The question uses an example of extreme contrasts in order to make a point about God. God is free! God is much higher than man's logic and reason. His ways are much higher than our ways. His plans and thoughts and goals are beyond human comprehension. Read Isaiah 55:8-9.

We are encouraged to consider that we are clay and God is the potter. He is our creator. We cannot comprehend the methods and strategies of the Creator. We should never take the position that we are capable of calling God's justice and mercy into question. The Lord is always righteous, just, holy, and pure in everything he does and says. His love endures forever.

Remember we are addressing God's justice in allowing Gentiles to be grafted into the tree of Israel's election. We are not dealing with a man-made system of bible philosophy. We are instead dealing with the Lord, and not a doctrine about the Lord. It is difficult for some to read the Bible text rather than reading a man-made system of thinking into the Bible text. Let us deal with what the Bible says and not with what we think it says.

We are vessels in God's hands. We are his instruments. I often consider the fact believers are the body of Christ. We are his hands and his feet on the earth. We serve God's purpose in the earth and bring glory and honor to his name by believing his word and abiding in the gospel of Jesus Christ every day.

9:24-26

Remember, much of Romans drives home the truth that in the church there is no separation between Jews and Gentiles. There is an objection to God's justice in the minds of Jews and Gentiles. Paul's answer to the question of God's justice is simple. God is God. You are not. He reiterated the truth that God grafted Gentiles into the tree of God's people through faith in the Jewish Messiah Jesus Christ. He proved this by quoting Old Testament Jewish prophets.

We see that going back to God's promises to Abraham God's purpose was bigger than the nation of Israel. This did not mean the church replaced national Israel. There are distinct sets of promises God makes. One set of promises he made to national Israel. A different set of promises were given to believers within national Israel and to Gentiles who believe God's promise of the Seed (Messiah, Christ, King). This Messiah destroyed the work and kingdom of Satan.

Paul's quotations in these verses point to the fact that it was God's plan to include Gentiles who would believe the gospel message.

The prophets in the Old Testament did not clearly see that Jewish people and Gentiles would comprise a new structure we know as the church. This was a mystery revealed to the Apostle Paul to teach through the letters he wrote the churches.

The prophets did see God's plan included more than just national Israel. As I said, God's creation of the church did not cancel out his previous arrangement with national Israel. It might be difficult, at times, to keep all this clear.

Here is how God showed it to me. God is three in one. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He revealed himself in the roles of Prophet, Priest, and King.

In the same way God's people reflect who God is. They are Israel, church, and the nations. These three dispensations can also be called "days". There are three days in God's revelation of himself in time and space. He is God three in one. There are only one people of God but they are revealed in time-space through Israel, through the church, and also soon through the kingdom age of King Jesus.

Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus comprise the church today. God is primarily at this present time revealing himself to the world through the church. He is also still speaking through the existence of national Israel.

He will in the future reveal himself through people who will believe in King Jesus during the millennium. This millennium is the thousand year reign of Christ on earth.

All three groups are one people of God. God is three in one. God's people are three in one.

There are three days in God's revelation of himself in time-space. At the end of these three days God completes everything in the New Jerusalem. That will be the completion of the universe in its present form.

A lot to take in. Praise God he revealed these things to simple, humble men and women who pray for wisdom and understanding. Thank you Jesus!

9:27-29

Paul quoted the prophets concerning the Gentiles and so now he quoted the prophets concerning Israel. He quoted Isaiah to make a point about a "remnant". He described a "seed" which the Lord left upon the earth.

When we see how Paul interpreted and applied Old Testament scripture we get an idea of how we can handle scripture. Paul saw patterns in prophecy. He saw prophetic patterns in scripture.

The nation of Israel was huge but there was only a few people within the outward structure who were true believers. This remnant held the promise of God concerning Messiah, the seed of the woman.

This is true of the church also. Many people profess faith in the Lord within the outward church. However, there are few true believers in Jesus. Many are called. Few are chosen.

When Paul quoted Isaiah "except the Lord of Sabbath had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom" he meant unless there existed a remnant the nation would have disappeared. But God has a plan for Israel and so there was always a remnant of Jewish people in the world. There would be no Israel if there were not a remnant. There would be no real church, also, without a remnant abiding in the outward structure of what men call the church.

The remnant represents overcomers who press on to know the Lord in their daily lives. They go beyond forgiveness of sins and experience victory over self, sin, the world, and the devil. This is the bride of Christ who is without spot or blemish. These are people who fear the Lord and depart from iniquity. They are not satisfied until God makes them holy, pure, and without any blame. They press on to know the Lord in everything he accomplished at Calvary.

God has a remnant who do not bow the knee to the false gods of current society and culture. Just like in the days of Elijah the Lord sets apart for himself a group of believers who walk in humility and in the fear of the Lord.

Let us pray we may be a part of this group of overcoming believers who walk in the Spirit and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ every day.

9:30-33

If we read these verses we understand the difference between saving faith in the Lord and all other religions in the world. This is the one distinct difference which makes a Christian different from everyone else in the world.

The mistake people made in Israel was the belief that adherence to a written code of rules would purchase them righteousness from God. However, the law itself did not impart righteousness to men. It only showed men how sinful they were and how deserving they were of God's wrath and justice.

However, there is a righteousness apart from the law which God gave as a free gift when we put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This righteousness through faith was given to everyone from Adam and Eve all the way to the present and into the future. The gospel of the Messiah, the promise of the Seed, existed from the beginning. Actually, it existed before the beginning and in eternity in the heart and mind of God. The gospel is the message that God justifies us, not based upon our performance or adherence to his rules, but based upon his promise of his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. When we believe in our heart that Jesus died on the cross, he was buried, and he rose from the dead on the third day, and when we confess this faith with our mouth we are saved. It is that simple. We believe and we confess. This is the basis upon which we enter eternal life with God.

However, religious people stumble over this. Paul quoted from the Old Testament again about this stumbling stone which he applied to the Lord Jesus. The religious people in the days of Jesus earthly ministry stumbled over him. They could not comprehend that they could become right with God by believing the word of this nobody prophet from Nazareth. He offended them. He offended their prestige, their positions, their titles.

He does the same today. He is still a stumbling stone for those who seek to find their own version of righteousness. Men always seek to justify themselves. Today they call this self-improvement or use modern terms, but it is the same thing. Men still assert their own self-righteousness instead of relying on the righteousness of Jesus.

How can you know if you are relying on self-righteousness instead of the righteousness of Christ? One easy way to see this is to notice every time you feel like you must defend yourself. Notice every single time you attempt to assert that you are right and other people are wrong. Self-assertiveness is a sign of a person relying upon their own self-righteousness instead of the righteousness of Christ. Pride is also the biggest symptom of self-righteousness. Pride can be seen in those who embrace self-love, self-image, and who talk about loving their own self. This is the propaganda of the world system, which is based upon self-worship. Self-worship is devil worship, by the way.

Let us deny self. Let us repent of self, sin, the world, and the devil. Let us repent of our own self-righteousness. Instead, let us look to Jesus who is the author and the finisher of our faith.

Call On The Name Of The Lord – Chapter 10

10:1-4

We see God's heart for Israel revealed through Paul's expression of his heart's desire. If Paul prayed for Israel then we should pray for Israel. All scripture is given by inspiration from God. Paul's heart of compassion for Israel reflects the heart of God. Since this is God's heart for Israel then we should have the same attitude. Christians should pray for Israel and seek the salvation of Israel. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

National Israel had a zeal for God. Paul testified that he persecuted Christians in religious zeal. This zeal was not based on knowledge. The enemy loves when people are zealous for religion with no true knowledge of the gospel of God. Religious zealots are hard to reach with the gospel, but apparently it was not impossible because the Lord reached Saul. He turned Saul into the apostle Paul.

Establishing our righteousness means we build our own self-righteousness. Self-righteousness is based upon what we can do or what we have done. It always leads to an attitude of pride. The pride of life can be subtle. People have a caricature in their mind of pride. They see a man with his nose turned up in the air. But this is not accurate. Pride is not only thinking highly of one's self. It is also an attitude of independence. It is self-worship. It is self-reliance. It is an attitude of putting one's self first. As Paul said in Philippians 2:21, "*For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.*"

In religion the purpose of self-righteousness is to exalt one's self over others through attainment of positions, titles, or prestige. People who walk in the pride of life and self-righteousness rely on their title or position for authority and influence. In reality, titles and positions do not give men real authority. Real authority is persuading others to serve Christ from a motive of love and humility. Jesus taught his disciples about this when he commanded them not to call one another rabbi, father, or master (all of which people do today, proving they operate according to the world system and not the Holy Spirit).

The righteousness of God is Jesus himself. God gives us this righteousness when we believe the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel is outlined in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 and summarized as Christ crucified, dead, buried, and risen again on the third day. How often do you hear this message from the pulpit?

Christ is the end of the law for those who believe. We do not relate to God through the law of God but through Christ Jesus. God does not give us a moral code; he gives us himself. We do not follow a moral code; we live our lives in the power of the Holy Spirit as we believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.

10:5-13

Let's focus on this last part "*whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*".

It is hard for me to agree to any theological system which promotes the concept that God's forgiveness is only for a select chosen labeled "elect". I see where people get the idea. Once this system is firmly planted in someone's mind everything in scripture is interpreted according to that system. That is where religious systematic theology becomes dangerous. It is dangerous because by saying God only saves a

limited few souls we put God in a box. However, anyone with enough time and determination can build an opposing system of theology which unhinges this idea that God only saves some people. These verses provide us with just one proof text we could use to do that.

Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. This does not allow us to create a closed system of theology that God is only interested in saving one group of men who were predestined to salvation. Whosoever! That is a good word to remember.

I'm not against taking what is good from theology systems but I am against allowing these systems to completely color my perception of who God is. We need to be careful to have a biblical framework of thinking and not a man-made systematic framework of thinking. The difference might seem like I'm splitting hairs, but it does make a great deal of difference. It is the difference between the "letter that killeth and the Spirit who giveth life". It is the difference between being a religious Pharisee or a humble follower of Jesus.

We don't know everything. We should not pretend we know everything when creating religious systems which exclude a plain interpretation of the Bible.

By assigning man-made values to religious words it is possible to completely change the meaning of the gospel, Jesus, and even who God is. This is how cults thrive. They take from Christianity and change it into half-truths and complete lies.

Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. If a man believes in his heart that Jesus rose from the dead and confesses with his mouth this faith then he is saved.

Paul continued to drive home the point that anyone can be saved and it did not matter if the man was a Jew or a Gentile. Paul was the leader in the early church promoting this message of including everyone in hearing the gospel. The gospel was preached to every person in the world. No one was excluded from knowing who God is. His arms are open to every person. All a man has to do is call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

10:14-15

We have a series of questions to inspire us about the process involved in getting people saved. How did this work? People were saved when they heard the gospel. In order to be saved a man must hear the gospel. Someone took the message and delivered it. Today we have various ways we can share, preach, proclaim, and communicate the gospel all over the world.

We are all called by God as Christians to be sent with the message. Every Christian is sent where he is at in life as a messenger of the gospel. We are called to let others around us know the gospel. The Lord sets aside certain men to do this full-time. We should all pray whether or not God wants us to work in this kind of "full time" ministry. However, do not think because you are not on the mission field in a foreign country that you are not in full time ministry. Even if you are not receiving financial support to preach the gospel you and I still have an obligation to tell others about Jesus.

How can they call on the Lord Jesus if they have never heard of him? It is hard to believe in today's world that anyone would not have heard about the Lord Jesus, but I suppose it is possible. Let us pray

that if there is any group of people who have never heard of Jesus that God will send someone to them. Ask the Lord if you might be the person God wants to send.

How can they believe unless they hear the gospel? Someone needs to tell them. God has not sent angels with the gospel in this current time but he sent men to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

How can men go to the ends of the earth to preach unless they are sent? This is a good question. This question is answered many times by churches forming organizations to raise money financially for individuals who are called to go out to the ends of the earth. There are many missionary organizations today that support men and women in the field.

It is the greatest privilege in the world to be used by God to communicate the gospel message. Let us ponder and meditate upon the gospel every day so that when we do have an opportunity to share with someone then it will be right there on our lips. The word will come out of us like a sword and pierce the heart of the unbeliever.

10:16-21

During his earthly ministry several times the Lord Jesus pointed out how great faith a Gentile person had in comparison with the lack of faith Israel had. He pointed this out in the account of the centurion and also the Gentile woman whose daughter was demon possessed. He drew attention to the great faith Gentile people had in contrast to the lack of faith Israel and his own disciples had.

The Lord has people who believe in him from every tribe, clan, family, tongue, and nation. The Lord calls people from all over the world to believe in him and to be saved through faith in his son Jesus Christ. God gave a witness of himself to anyone who wants to know him. If anyone has a desire to know the truth the Lord will reveal himself to them.

Saving faith comes when we hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. When we continue in God's word our faith will continue to grow and we will see life around us through the framework of the truth which is God's word.

Not everyone hears God's word believes or obeys. Some people who are determined to live according to their own self-righteousness can hear God's word but it does not produce saving faith in their heart. Instead they are disobedient and go their own way. The Lord stands all day long with his hands outstretched to these people but they will not come to him. They would rather hold onto the rags of their self-righteousness. Their pride and position in this life means more to them than being with the Lord forever in eternity.

No one can say they did not know the Lord Jesus, including Israel. Moses and the prophets pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ as Messiah, and also prophesied that Israel as a nation would reject their Messiah when he came. Just like Joseph's brothers rejected him but later received him when they bowed their knee to him, so also the Jews rejected their Messiah the first time but when he returns the second time they will bow their knee and call him Lord.

"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God". I take this literally and apply this to my life. I've noticed that when I stay in God's word my faith grows stronger, but when I neglect God's word I

become weaker in my faith. God's word keeps us from sin, or if we let it, sin will keep us from God's word. Let us feed our heart and mind upon the truth in God's word. Let us not allow a single day to go by that we do not read, study, and meditate upon the word of God. It is our daily bread we need to stay spiritually strong and healthy.

Israel, Church, and the Kingdom – Chapter 11

11:1-5

The nation of Israel is part of God's plan and a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. The point Paul made was that God still has a plan for Israel. His plan was for Israel to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. He is their Messiah.

Paul came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and he was a Jew. Paul said God did not turn his back on Jews because Paul was a Jew who came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. God's plan is for Jews and Gentiles both to believe in the Messiah and together form the church. This does not mean the church replaces national Israel. There are distinct promises and an everlasting covenant which God made with national Israel that will be fulfilled.

As Paul taught us in the letter to the Romans believers in the Messiah have a relationship with God based on God's grace. Our relationship with God is not based on adherence to the law of Moses. Our relationship with God is based on grace demonstrated through Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection.

Believers within Israel were a minority and were a remnant. This remnant can be seen throughout scripture. There was only a remnant who returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile of Israel. This remnant rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple. These were true believers in God. There was also a remnant in Israel during the time of Elijah as Paul pointed out in these verses.

The Lord has a remnant of overcoming believers in the Messiah. These are men and women who believe God's promise of the Seed who crushed the head of the serpent. These are believers who look to the Messiah. God's Messiah is the Lord Jesus Christ. He fulfilled the prophecies in the Old Testament of the Messiah who gave his life as a lamb for the sins of Israel and for the entire world. He died on the cross, he was buried, and he rose again the third day.

Those who look to Jesus are the grace remnant. They live because of God's free gift given through the Lord Jesus Christ. God provided forgiveness of sins, deliverance from self, sin, the world, and the devil. His provision was the God-Man, the Son of God, and God the Son Jesus Christ.

11:6

This verse makes it clear we cannot relate to God on the basis of works and on the basis of grace at the same time. If it is grace then it is no more works. If we try to mix grace and works then we no longer have grace. If it is works then it is no more grace. If it is grace it is no more works. Paul made it clear that we cannot have both. This is a serious problem for people in the church.

It is a serious problem because when we relate to God on the wrong basis we fail, are discouraged, and do not experience victory. We continue to be slaves to sin and live in fear and unbelief.

The only hope of experiencing victory over self, sin, the world, and the devil is through God's grace. We must rely completely on the grace of God in order to walk in the Spirit and live as an overcomer. There can be no victory in the life of the Christian who relies upon his performance or good works.

Grace and works affect everything in our lives and not just how sins are forgiven. Some people believe that if they do more good than bad then the good will outweigh their sins. This is not what the Bible teaches. This idea is a man-made model or system of performance based religion. This is how all religions with the exception of Christianity operate. There are a lot of Christian based cults who also operate like this. One of the biggest cults that teach this is the Catholic religion.

When we read the letter of James it seems to contradict the gospel of grace which Paul preached. The way to put this in perspective is to understand what the author aimed to accomplish. James was not outlining salvation. Instead, he described what someone who had saving faith through God's grace looked like. There were impostors in the church who claimed to be Christians but James said we could tell they were not because of their lifestyle. The letters of John also point this out.

What Paul wrote had to do with how a man is saved and the difference between true faith and works-based Judaism. Paul spent time in his ministry showing the difference between faith in the Messiah and the man-made system of Judaism which existed at that time.

The principles Paul taught help us understand the difference between a real relationship with God based on God's grace and the man-made systems of works-based religion that exist throughout the world.

A Christian is not a follower of another religion. This is a fundamental difference between a true Christian and all people who believe in man-made systems of philosophy or religion. Christianity is not about following a moral code, or self-improvement, or about how to succeed in this world. True Christianity teaches us how to have a relationship with God based on what Jesus accomplished through his death, burial, and resurrection. This is the gospel of God's grace. Everything a Christian is and becomes is based on God's grace and has nothing to do with any efforts we make to change our life. Ephesians 2:8-9, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*"

Works-based systems glorify man and lead to boasting of what one can accomplish, how one has evolved, changed, or become a better person. All the credit goes to the person who worked their program or system. This is the exact opposite of what it means to be a Christian. This is why I abhor systems such as AA and 12-step programs. This is man-made religion boiled down its basics so that no one is offended by a religious aroma but it is in reality extremely religious and is spiritual poison to those who submit themselves to it.

It is by grace we are saved. If a man's life is changed by God's grace then he will know that it was nothing he did. He did not take credit for any change in his life. Instead, he gave all the honor and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is by grace we were forgiven, saved, delivered, sanctified, and will one day be glorified with a new resurrection body.

11:7-11

"Through their fall" points directly to the rejection of the Messiah by Israel's leaders. Jesus came to his own but his own did not receive him. (John 1:11). By rejecting their Messiah Israel as a whole became blind. When anyone rejects light all they have left is darkness. Rejecting truth leaves a man with lies. This is what Judaism became after the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. It became something completely different than what it was before the temple was destroyed.

Does this mean the church replaced Israel? The church did not replace Israel. God has a specific set of promises in an everlasting covenant which he made to national Israel. This covenant included a land covenant with specific boundaries. These promises will be fulfilled in the 1,000 year kingdom of Christ on this earth.

The rejection by Israel of their Messiah provided an opportunity for those outside Israel to hear of Israel's Messiah. The gospel did not stay in Jerusalem and Israel. As Jesus said it would the gospel traveled from Jerusalem, to Judaea, to Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Paul said the salvation of Gentiles by Israel's Messiah provoked Israel to jealousy. This is exactly what we see happening throughout the ministry of Paul. His chief opponents were Jewish religious people. They were the ones who created trouble for him everywhere.

People who hate Jews use this as an excuse to stir up trouble for them over the past 2,000 years. This is a tragedy, because Jewish people are beloved of God. Satan hates them because they are the people God used to write the Bible, including the New Testament, and to preserve it for us. Jesus himself came into this world a Jew!

It is irrational for a Christian to think he replaced the Jewish people. There are true believers (Christians) within Israel who believe in Jesus. There is a remnant of Jewish people today who believe in Jesus. There were always Jewish people who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the remnant within Israel and it is the remnant today which exists within the outward structure of what men call the "church".

Not everyone in the church believe in Jesus. There are people in the church who put faith in faith, or who put faith in self-improvement, or stand in church foyers making business contacts.

Not everyone who is in the church are Christian brothers. There are many wolves and tares sitting in pews of churches. They stand behind the pulpit moralizing or teaching people the principles of self-worship.

Gentile salvation was in God's mind from the beginning. God told Abraham he would be a blessing to many nations. He would be a father to many nations. Those who believe the promise of the Seed of the Woman, who put their faith in Jesus, are grafted into God's household. This house began with Abraham, Isaac, and Israel.

11:12-15

This "fall" and "casting away" are temporary conditions. Notice how he asked the question "how much more their fulness" and "life from the dead"? Something that appeared to be dead will be raised to life. Something that was temporarily fallen or cast away is restored and made full and complete. What was Paul talking about here?

God is not finished with Israel. The church did not replace Israel. Instead, the Gentiles who believe in Jesus were grafted into an olive tree which is Israel. The church is Gentile and Jewish believers in the Messiah. Also, God's promises to national Israel will be fulfilled. All Israel as a nation will one day be saved when Jesus returns.

Paul made an interesting revelation concerning his personal ministry which he received from the Lord. Paul described himself as an apostle of the Gentiles. Peter and the apostles who followed Jesus during his earthly ministry were primarily apostles to Jewish people. Paul was different. However, though he was an apostle to Gentiles he loved his countrymen and prayed for their salvation. This is why Paul never signed the book of Hebrews. He was an apostle to the Gentiles and the letter to the Hebrews was Paul's letter to Jewish Christians.

The fulfillment of God's promises to Israel was compared to "life from the dead". This should trigger something in the mind of a biblical Christian. Who was raised from the dead? Jesus! The Lord Jesus was raised from the dead. When was he raised from the dead? On the third day.

In a similar fashion when Jesus returns the second time there will be another resurrection on a third day. It will be the third day of God's dealing with mankind when Jesus returns to set up his thousand year kingdom. On that day Israel will be raised up and will be complete.

11:16-22

We can identify the qualities which caused Israel to miss out on their Messiah: being highminded and unbelieving. Paul warned Gentile believers not to be highminded, but believe, and to continue in the goodness of God.

How does one continue in God's goodness? Through humility and by faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. One of the symptoms of pride is moving away from the simplicity of the gospel. Men move away from the gospel of Jesus Christ because of human pride. They move towards psychology and human philosophy the more pride takes root. Unbelief produces pride and pride results in drifting away from the gospel. Going away from the gospel cuts off a man from God's goodness, because all of God's goodness is wrapped up in the Son of God. There is no other way to abide in God except through the Son of God.

The Lord Jesus is the fulfillment of the olive tree. When teaching his disciples he used a similar analogy in John 15 comparing himself to a vine and his disciples to branches. We must abide in him or else we are cut off and cast into the fire. A branch cut off from the vine has no more life and only waits to be thrown on a fire. How do we abide in the Lord Jesus? We abide in him by believing the gospel: Jesus was crucified, he died, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) The gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes. (Romans 1:16).

Paul taught us the relationship Gentile believers had to Israel. Gentile believers were grafted into the olive tree which is Israel. All of the Bible comes from Israel. Think about it. Almost everything in the Holy Bible was written by a Jewish believer. It was preserved and kept by Jewish believers. Christians, both Jew and Gentile believers, should have reverence and respect for Israel.

11:23-25

Paul mentioned here a "mystery" which he did not want Gentile believers to be ignorant of. Israel was now partly blind to the gospel until every Gentile who would be saved is saved. When the last Gentile who will believe is saved then something incredible happen to Israel as a nation: they will suddenly turn as one man to the Messiah. They will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as one man. As one people. As national Israel.

This event is still before us. I feel in my heart this is not far off. The days are approaching that the redeemer will return to Zion! The days are approaching when the Son of Man will step foot on the Mount of Olives. I cannot write about this without feeling a great wave of emotion. My heart is in my throat even now as I consider this. I believe we are that generation who will see the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even so, return to us quickly, Lord Jesus!

11:26-29

What does it mean that all Israel shall be saved? This is a prophecy of an event that is still yet in our future as I am writing today. This prophecy points to the second return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth at the end of the seven year tribulation. The Lord Jesus will return and set his foot once again in Israel. He will rescue and deliver Israel from the threat of the Antichrist and all of the work of the devil. All Israel will look upon him and they will believe in him. This is similar to how Joseph's brothers rejected him at first but later when he saved them they bowed down and accepted him. Joseph is a type of the Lord Jesus at the second return of Jesus Christ to this earth.

The deliverer will come out of Zion and he will turn away ungodliness in Jacob. All Israel will turn away from unbelief and they will believe in their Messiah Jesus. He will save them from their sins and deliver them from their enemies. Amen!

Presently Israel is for the most part antagonistic to the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, they are still beloved of God for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God made promises to Israel that are everlasting and God will keep all the promises which he made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and also to King David.

God's gifts and his calling on his people do not change. God's gift and calling on Israel will never change. If Christians believe that God changed his mind about Israel then they also have no assurance. If God changed his mind about Israel then he can change his mind about the church, right? But we know God does not change his mind. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. God does not change his mind. What God has said God will also do.

This can be applied on a personal basis in our lives. Has God given you gifts and has God called you? God will not take back his gift or his calling on your life. We need to turn back to God, humble our hearts, and repent. The Lord is waiting for us to return to him with all of our hearts. Let us believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and rest in his completed, finished work.

11:30-36

Here is the doxology and conclusion of the conversation Paul iterated several times in the last few chapters and throughout the book of Romans. He confessed that all of these matters were beyond his own understanding. Even Paul could only see these things through a dark glass (1 Corinthians 13:12), and his conclusion was that though we may understand some things in bits and pieces God will always remain far beyond whatever doctrinal category we attempt to create.

When I read these verses I am reminded, also, of the book of Job. At the end of that book Job and his companions realized that God was much bigger and larger and more powerful than what we can imagine with our feeble doctrines and weak belief systems. God cannot be contained by the imagination and mental framework of man's reasoning.

There is only one proper response to this great God who is above all things. The proper response is to give him glory, honor, and praise. To God be the glory. Great things he has done. Amen.

A Living Sacrifice – Chapter 12

12:1

Now we take a different turn in the book of Romans. Until this point we've learned doctrine, but now Paul took a turn toward personal application. This was a pattern in Paul's letters. He taught believers who they were in Christ and covered doctrine. Toward the end of a letter he turned toward application of what he had covered.

In the first verse of Romans chapter 12 we see true spiritual authority. Did Paul demand they do what he said? Did he command them to do what he said? He made a humble plea to them. He beseeched these Roman brothers by the mercies of God. He asked them to apply what he taught them because God loved them. Our greatest motivation for living for the Lord Jesus is love. I've seen preachers and ministries inject other motives into their teaching and methods. They brow beat, threaten, and demand compliance to their leadership. But what did Paul do? He beseeched them by the mercies of God.

Paul asked them to apply the truth to their life because God loved them. God is merciful. This love and mercy should produce gratitude and a motivation to want to obey. If we cannot be persuaded to apply God's word to our lives out of a motive of love then nothing else will work. Men will not be brow beat, threatened, or manipulated into following Jesus. One cannot trick or deceive people into following Jesus. One cannot hold out the carrot of position and prestige to get people to follow Jesus forever.

There is only one sure foundation for obedience and that is heartfelt love for the Lord Jesus. Only love will succeed in the long run. All other motives will fall to the ground and fail. Only love will endure.

We are to present our bodies a living sacrifice. What does this mean? The Christian life is not just about spiritual ideas but is practical. It is down to earth. We serve God when we pray and read the Bible. We also serve God when we go to our job and labor. We serve God on Sunday, and we serve God every day of the week in the many tasks we perform faithfully. We should work with all our heart as working for the Lord. (Colossians 3:23). Everything in our life is service to God.

I was once confused about what it meant to be in "full time" ministry. In one sense, I understand there are people who dedicate their careers to preaching the Bible. However, even in Paul's situation, this meant sometimes he needed to make tents. People did not always help him financially. We should rethink what full time ministry means, especially today as the outward structure of the church is under intense attack. We should rethink what having "church" means and what "full time ministry" means.

If you are a Christian you are in full time ministry. Paul said as Christians we offer our bodies in service to God. This means everything, the spiritual and physical, is devoted to God. A man is not just a spirit. A man is not just a body. A man is spirit, and soul, and body. (1 Thessalonians 5:23). We offer our entire life upon the altar to God. Don't hold anything back. Don't think you can just be a Christian on Sunday morning. Our service to God includes our whole life. Every day is dedicated in service to the Lord. Every day, every hour, every minute is consecrated to the Lord Jesus. This is our reasonable service.

Our reasonable response to what the Lord Jesus did for us is to give him our entire life. It is our reasonable response to offer ourselves to him. It is reasonable to offer my life to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Actually, this is the only sane thing any man can ever do with his life. Any other thing a man gives his life for is vanity and will end in regret and sorrow. The only life worth living is the life which is totally surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ.

12:2

Christians do not agree with the world system. This is an entire area which a Christian needs to comprehend. It is vitally important to understand the difference between the world system and the Kingdom of God. If we never understand the difference between the world system and the Kingdom of God how can we know if we are conformed to this world? We are commanded by the Holy Spirit to not be conformed to the world.

A good place to start discerning between what is of the world system and what is of the Kingdom of God is to understand the fundamental differences. One difference is that the world system is based and built on the principle of self-worship. At the heart of the world system is self. At the heart of the Kingdom of God is Christ Jesus. This is a fundamental difference between the world system and the Kingdom of God. At the heart of the world system is man and self-worship. At the heart of the Kingdom of God is Jesus Christ.

In order not to be conformed to the world system we obey what the Lord Jesus said. We must deny our self and take up our cross. We must die to self. This can only be done by faith in the finished, completed work of the Lord Jesus Christ in his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection.

How are we transformed by the renewing of our mind? We start by paying attention to what we look at. What do we listen to? What do we meditate on? These are basic steps we can take. How can we hope to be renewed in our minds if we pay no attention to what we feed our mind on? Think about this. Men are created to be conformed to whatever they set their eyes on. If the eyes are set on self then one will die spiritually. If one sets his mind on the Lord Jesus Christ then he will be filled with life. Jesus said he is the bread from heaven. We are to eat him like we eat bread. We must feed our soul, our mind, and spirit upon this bread from heaven. This is how we are renewed in our mind. This is how we are transformed. We are transformed, either bad or good, by what we feed our soul on.

The soul has an appetite like the stomach. It craves stimulation, knowledge, input, excitement. It craves to be inspired by beauty. It craves experiences. We must learn to direct this hunger toward what will truly satisfy and not feed our soul crumbs the world system offers.

Proving God's will means we find out through personal experience that obedience to God's word is the best way to live. It is not merely one way to live but rather it is the best way a man can live. It is the best way because God created man to live in a relationship with him. We were not created to live independent of our Creator. We were made to be in union with the Lord.

When we walk in obedience to God's word then we find out that true satisfaction in life comes through obedience to the Lord. Happiness which lasts forever does not come by doing our own thing. When we do our own thing we experience pleasures of sin for a short season. Afterward we are left with a greater hunger and desperation to experience more. This is the path of addiction and darkness. It is the path that leads to the lake of fire. Instead, when we turn to God in repentance and put our faith in the Lord Jesus we find a life which gets better and better the longer we travel.

The thoughts I've shared are basic to the Christian life. Unless we learn to not be conformed to the world we will not make spiritual progress. Unless we can learn to be transformed by the renewing of our mind we will not make spiritual progress. This is basic Christian living.

12:3

The reason we think soberly is to fit in with others in the church. A Christian does not function in isolation. A Christian functions with other brothers and sisters in Christ. One of the quickest ways to destroy fellowship with others is pride. Paul exhorted us to think soberly and not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought. A proper estimation of ourselves in light of the entire church is needed. When men think highly of themselves they will not listen to others and will not work with others in the church.

Sadly, I know I have failed in this regard. As a young Christian I believed I was one of the Green Beret in God's army. This belief did not help me get along with people in the church. Instead, I developed a critical attitude toward pastors. I would not listen to someone if they made only one mistake in what they said.

Think soberly. No church is perfect. No preacher is perfect. No group of Christians is perfect. However, the Lord Jesus promised that where two or three of us gather in his name that he is with us. The Lord is with Christians who gather together in his name. We want to be a part of that group. What stops us from being a part of the church is pride. We think too highly of ourselves. We think we are better than other Christians. We think we are more spiritual. We think we are more gifted. We put ourselves in a different class of Christians. We think we are the elite Christian and these other people are uneducated, or ignorant, or biblical illiterate. Watch out! This attitude will separate you from the body of Christ. It will isolate you. It will turn you into a lonely Christian.

We need to consider where we fit in the body of Jesus Christ. I think I have finally understood my place in the church. The Lord called me to wash the feet of God's people. I am someone the Lord asked to take care of this task of washing people's feet. What does that mean? It means I am ready to listen to people. I am ready to hear what they say without passing judgment or being critical. It means I will

give them God's word. It is the word of God which washes the feet of the saints. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. The word washes us today. This does not mean God called me to stand behind a pulpit or in front of a group of people. I'm not over anybody. I am a servant. One by one I go around washing people's feet with the word of God. One by one I offer the word of God to others to refresh them, encourage them, to help them. I am called to edify, comfort, exhort with God's word.

This work involves denying self and not making a name for self. It is a calling to humble self, deny self, carry my cross. It means I don't put my problems on other people, but take all of my problems to God alone and let him carry my problems. I will ask no man to meet my needs, but only look to the Lord because he is my provider, he is my protector, he is my portion.

Think soberly about where you fit in the church. There is a great need for men and women of God to walk in humility and to be kind, generous, loving, forgiving, longsuffering.

Romans 12:4-5

Paul compared the church to the human body. There are many members in the human body, many different parts which go into creating the whole body. In a similar way there are many different roles people occupy within the church to make it function. Why did Paul teach this?

We need to understand where we as individuals fit in the church. We need to do this with a serious mind and with humility. The importance of this is so that each person will perform their function and not try to take on what someone else does.

By nature men have the attitude of the world system. The world system is described by the Lord Jesus as people operating according to an elitist and hierarchical mindset. People in the world work together through the mechanism of self-worship, self-survival, pride, position, and prestige.

However, it is impossible for members in the church to function this way. People still try to run the church like a worldly corporation but this method does not promote spiritual life.

We need to consider who we are with humility. We are all members of the body of Christ. Most churches in modern America think there is only one member in the church and that is the pastor. Everyone else just occupies a pew on Sunday morning. If they show up and get listed on the attendance roster they have done what is required. This is worldly and carnal thinking.

We are the body of Christ. Each one of us are members. We need to realize where we fit in the church and be faithful to do our part. Do this with humility. Do this knowing that we as an individual are only a small part but no matter how small we are still important to the Lord and the church.

12:6-8

Here we have a list of spiritual gifts which Christians receive from the Lord in order to build, edify, exhort, and comfort others in the church. The purpose of spiritual gifts is to build the church. Some people may have more than one gift, but I notice people tend to be stronger in one or two gifts. For example, someone who proclaims the word (prophesy) may not necessarily be a good administrator. Sometimes a preacher is not as merciful or his mercy towards others is not cheerful. You may find someone who is merciful but they are poor teachers of the word.

This is why we need each other. God has made us so that we need one another. We cannot truly function as the church without working with other Christians.

Let's list the gifts: prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling, showing mercy. Obviously in many ways these gifts overlap. I don't think we need to keep all these separate and try to identify what gifts we have or don't have. I believe the Holy Spirit can use us depending on the situation in any gift. I am not normally a merciful person but I can remember moments in relating to another person that the Lord gave me a supernatural capacity for mercy toward someone. I knew it was not something which came out of me but was a gift God gave me for that person.

Probably in my life I see myself using gifts of exhortation, teaching, and prophecy. Even when I write, I default to exhortation. However, I do feel I have patience to learn topics exhaustively which makes a good teacher of doctrine. Also, I know I experience frequently in my life the gift of proclaiming God's word to people around me.

On the other hand, I'm weak with mercy, administration, or ministry. I don't by default take initiative to serve other people and rarely think about organizing other people to get a project done. I have seen other people with those gifts and I'm pretty sure it is not me. However, the Lord can use us in whatever capacity depending on the circumstances.

I would exhort us to always remain flexible and don't assign ourselves a title based on what we think we are gifted in. Let God use us no matter what our gifts may be and we may have to be ready to perform tasks that are outside of the gifts we think we have. We can cross reference this list of gifts with another list of spiritual gifts which Paul outlined in First Corinthians 12.

12:9

From verse 9 down to the end of chapter 12 we have a list of instructions from Paul and the Holy Spirit. We start with his first instruction. Let love be without dissimulation. A definition of "dissimulation": from Latin "dissimulate" is concealment of one's thoughts, feelings, or character. Paul's instruction, then, is for our love to be sincere and without hypocrisy. How could someone show love and be insincere? Isn't love always a good thing? No, it is not always good. People pretend to love others so they can get an advantage over them or manipulate or control others.

As a Christian our love is to be wholehearted, straight forward, and sincere. We are not to love people expecting to receive something in return. Those who say they love others and expect something in return are not really loving in sincerity. Sincere love does not expect anything in return. Real, biblical love is demonstrated by the Lord Jesus Christ. He loved others and blessed others with a sincere motive. He loved us when there was no reason to love us. God demonstrated his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

It is not possible for us to love like Christ did unless the Lord Jesus is in our hearts. Only through the power of the Holy Spirit can we love other people and expect nothing in return. This takes a man who denies self, takes up his cross, and walks in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Along with love we also cleave to what is good and abhor what is evil. People today twist the word "love" into perverse contexts. Biblical love is good, pure, and holy. We cling to what is good. Abhor

what is evil. If we read the Bible, if the Holy Spirit lives in us, it will not be hard to discern what is evil and what is good.

12:10-16

Brotherly love is having a sense of affection for people. This is a sense of community with people who are of like-minded faith. This is impossible when everyone has their own opinions or follows their own favorite bible teacher or bible doctrines. Brotherly love grows in an atmosphere of unity and like-mindedness.

We give preference to others. This means thinking of the other person before you think of yourself. This is not natural to humans but is an attitude that must be learned. We start by placing value on putting others before ourselves. The value of this was taught by the Lord Jesus when he washed the feet of his disciples.

The Christian is not lazy but passionate about life, work, and business. In everything we do let us do it as unto the Lord. Work for the Lord and not just your employer. Work with all your heart. Be passionate and fervent in doing a good job.

We rejoice because we have hope in the Lord, we are patient in our trials because we know God has a plan and he is in control, and through it all we pray, pray, pray. Prayer does move God on our behalf. I've seen it myself. When we feel tempted to worry or stress out then pray instead. Find a place and go pray.

We need to be aware of the needs of brothers and sisters in Christ. We take care of people in the church. There are people in the church who suffer because they lack material resources. Know who those people are and check on them. Make sure you are the one God uses to supply their need. Let's make people feel at home in our house. Be ready at all times to share how much you care by listening to people and sitting down with them over a meal.

Pride is the enemy of the Christian. It causes you to separate yourself from people in church who need you. Don't just hang around people who are on your level but look for people you can serve in the church. Look for those who need encouragement, comfort, and material help. What is the purpose of helping people who can help you? That is the what the world does. Don't walk in pride or position like the world. Instead humble yourself and associate with brothers of low position. In God's eyes we are all on the same level. The Lord Jesus made sure we were all on the same level when he humbled himself, washed his disciples' feet, and then went to the cross at Calvary. Christ died for us. Let's be ready to humble ourselves and obey God in serving others.

12:17-21

Unbelievers get revenge and attempt to execute justice for themselves. This is not allowed for the Christian. We are not to seek revenge. Instead, we are commanded to love our enemies, forgive those who persecute us or mistreat us or sin against us, and overcome evil by doing good. Overcome evil with good.

This is not easy. It requires a firm grasp on who God is and a steadfast faith in God's ability to oversee every detail of our lives. Our flesh and the devil will attempt to provoke us to retaliate against people.

This is the wrong course of action for any Christian. Our responsibility is to turn the other cheek always.

Paul teaches us that vengeance belongs to God. We are not smart enough and it is not our responsibility to see that other people get what is coming to them. The Lord did not give this job to us. Don't consider getting even with other people. Instead, if someone steals your dinner then give them the dessert too. Overcome evil with good.

Don't be pulled into talking about people behind their back because you can't stand them. This is a subtle way of getting even with that person. Don't try to put others down in conversation. This is a verbal revenge tactic and the Lord will not be happy if you do this. Don't talk about others period, ever. It is best to just not talk about other people.

These instructions might seem impossible. However, it is not impossible. God can change the way we think and react and how we feel. If we will humble our heart before God he can give us the grace we need to overcome evil by doing good. Remember God's promise: I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13.

Submission To Government – Chapter 13

13:1

This is a difficult passage for people who can only think with human logic. How can every power which exist be ordained of God? This describes human government. The higher power described was human government. This means kings, queens, or presidents.

The New Testament teaches us that Christians are to submit to government. The apostle Peter broke down submission to authority into smaller units in his letter. He described the duty of the Christian to submit in every sphere of life. This included submission to human government. We submit to parents, family members, spouses, employers, political leaders, and to church leaders. There is no sphere of life in which we should rebel against authority.

The idea of rebellion against government is not biblical. People who rebel against government, including the Americans who rebelled against the British government, did so by going outside Bible doctrine. They may have had many good reasons to rebel but the reasons were not biblical reasons. It is not the duty of Christians to rebel against government.

Our example is the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus never taught his disciples to rebel against government. He was completely apolitical in his teachings. Jesus did not teach people to rebel against religious leaders. He did warn people about the teachings of religious leaders which were unbiblical but he did not teach rebellion against authority of government.

Why is this? Romans 13:1 tells us. The powers that be are ordained by God. God sets who he wants into power. We see this in the book of Daniel with Nebuchadnezzar. We see this in the Bible how God raised up one nation and put down another.

It is not the Christian's job to rebel against government. I do not believe the Bible teaches Christians to take part in rebellion against government.

How is this applied in our lives? It depends. There are examples from history of Christians who did participate in resisting government. I do not condemn what they did and I do not judge what they did. They followed their conscience. My point is to make it clear that the Bible does not teach Christians in the New Testament to rebel against government. In fact, I believe the New Testament teaches submission to authority many times by different writers. We should always do everything possible to have a humble attitude toward people in a position of authority. Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4.

13:2-5

Human government serves the purpose of God in maintaining peaceful society. God uses human government to maintain order so people can live in peace.

Paul taught that anyone who rebels against the government receives punishment. Anyone who resists the government resists an ordinance God put into place. As a result the person will suffer for resisting. Government is put in place by God and for God's purpose.

Under normal circumstances people who do what is right have nothing to fear from government. Our minds are always filled with exceptions to this because propaganda injects this into our mind. The spirit behind mainstream media such as news, movies, TV, and music is designed to turn men's hearts toward rebellion. This is fermenting in society today. The work of the devil is to incite men to rebel against authority.

The job of government is to reward those who do good and punish those who do evil. It is the responsibility of government to punish evildoers. Paul said that the job of government was to execute wrath against those who do evil.

We should submit to the government, not only because of the fear of wrath, but for the sake of our own conscience. We should do what is right because doing wrong will harm ourselves.

It is important to teach children to respect authority. If they learn to respect authority at home then they will not grow up and rebel against government. What we see today is a generation of people who were never taught to respect authority in their home. Now they have no respect for government.

People who participate in riots, protests, and resisting government will lose. God ordained that they would lose. They cannot win. They will suffer the consequences rebellion brings.

13:6-8

Paul continued with the theme of submission to government but also introduced another thought in this section. He repeated what the Lord Jesus taught about rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. Pay taxes. We should respect the authority of government. Government acts as God's servant to bring order to society.

We are taught to owe no man anything but to love one another. We should not owe people anything except the debt we owe all men to love them. The Lord Jesus loved us and showed his love by dying on the cross for us. We will always be indebted to love people.

Owing people means we are in debt. It is hard to live in the world and not be in debt. The world system is built to put people in debt. Debt is slavery. However, we can minimize debt by frugal lifestyles. Don't live beyond what you bring in. Don't get in debt unless there is no other choice. The way the world is set up we cannot avoid debt to buy a house or car. The medical system will put you in debt quickly if you have ongoing illness. These are unavoidable. However, as a Christian my goal is to strive toward being debt free as possible. Owe no man anything is the goal.

We have a debt to always love others. Love is the fulfillment of God's law.

13:9-10

Love never fails. It is the fulfillment of God's law if we do this: Love God and love our neighbor.

Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment. Jesus replied that the greatest commandment was to love God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, and the second greatest is to love our neighbor. Jesus defined for us what "neighbor" means in his parable about the good Samaritan. Our neighbor is whoever needs our help. Anyone. Everyone. We are to love each person who crosses our path. We treat others with honor, respect, and love people in the same way Jesus did. How did Jesus love people? He loved us enough that he died on the cross for us so that we could escape God's just wrath against sin.

It is not necessary for us to memorize the laws Israel observed in the Old Testament. Instead, Jesus summarized the law and prophets. The complete summary is to love God and love our neighbor.

This is another reason I think it is illogical for Christians to want to be "Hebrew" Christians. It makes no sense. We do not grow spiritually nor do we commend ourselves to God by striving to obey detailed laws of Israel. The only law we keep before us is the law of love. Even love can be misunderstood or put into a sinful context. Men change the meanings of words. This is the work of the devil to constantly change the meaning of words so men never know where they stand. Love is best defined in the Bible. The old English word for love in the Bible is "charity". Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

13:11-14

Paul said we should "know the time". What does that mean? It means we should not live with our head in the sand. We should not be ignorant of what is happening around us. Awareness of the world around us is vital for a Christian. We need to be aware of world events, and specifically, we need to be alert to where we are at in our individual lives.

Paul pointed to world events around him. He looked at what happened and saw that it pointed to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. We know his letter was written thousands of years ago. People take this as a reason to dismiss Paul's urgent plea that we be alarmed at the day we live in. When we do this we do not see that the Bible is written from the perspective of eternity. In light of God's viewpoint it is urgent for us to realize the night is far spent and the day is at hand.

Our life could be over any moment and we will enter eternity. If world events move slowly from our point of view we still do not have time to relax. Our life could end any moment. God could speak a word and life could end. Our time could be up any moment. What keeps us alive? Only God's mercy and grace keeps us alive. Our next breath is in God's hands. He holds our soul in life.

We need to remove everything that is compromise. Paul said to "cast off the works of darkness". Any area which bothers our conscience needs to be addressed. We need to put on the Lord Jesus Christ every day. How do we do that? We can thank God every day in prayer that he took us out of Adam and placed us into Christ. God himself put us into Christ Jesus and united us together with the Lord in crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection.

Believe the gospel every day. Confess it, believe it, stand on it. Don't be moved away from the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. Live it, thank God for it, think about it, and pray it.

I try to start each day thanking the Lord for what he did for me. I thank the heavenly Father for placing me in Christ Jesus so I am united with the Lord Jesus in his finished, completed work. I thank God for filling me with the Holy Spirit. This is a good way to put on the Lord Jesus Christ every day.

When we do this then also think in practical terms about your daily life and search anything which would make it easy for you to give in to sin, temptation, the flesh, or the devil. Deal with those areas brutally and without mercy. Read Psalm 119:37.

Love And Accepting Others – Chapter 14

14:1

The weak brother was afraid to eat meat and thought he was spiritual by keeping the Sabbath. However, because we know better and are confident in what Christ accomplished we still need to be gracious toward the weak brother. When I say "gracious" I do not mean "condescending".

We know eating meat does not subtract from our relationship with Jesus. Our non-observance of certain days should not make us think we are better than the brother who does. The one who is weak in his faith is the one who does not eat meat for religious reasons. The one who is weak in his faith is someone who thinks he must observe holy days. Paul focused here on the attitude of Christians toward one another. There will be brothers who are weak in faith. There will be those who are convinced of the complete work of Christ and know they cannot add or take away from what Christ did. The point is our love for one another in the church. How do men with such different ideas about doctrine and religious topics get along with each other?

We make a commitment to receive each other. What does it mean to receive one another? We accept people where they are. We love people exactly where they are in their walk with the Lord. Some people have walked with the Lord a long time. Some are just starting. You put these people in the same building and there must be a guiding principle which goes beyond difference of opinion.

The guiding principle is to love our brother and accept him. Also, Paul added that we do not accept people with the idea that as soon as we can we will get them straightened out. I've learned the hard way you cannot make people believe the way you do. Sometimes the more you reason with people the more determined they stick with their position.

If someone is weak in faith pray for them. Pray the Lord will help them. The Lord is the only one who can help them. Our part is to accept brothers and sisters in Christ. Our part is to love them and accept them where they are.

14:2-4

We have a tendency to oppress brothers in Christ with opinions. We don't stop with our personal preferences. We want everyone to have the same opinion we do. This can be damaging when this kind of oppression is allowed in the church.

People have different opinions on what God allows or doesn't allow when it comes to topics such as eating and drinking. Notice Paul said the person who was weak in faith abstained from eating meat. I don't know why people would abstain from eating meat for religious reasons, but Paul said it demonstrated weak faith when people mix faith with food. Perhaps this went back to dietary laws God gave ancient Israel. For example, pork is not kosher for a Jew. There were other examples but Paul said abstaining from certain foods showed a lack of faith. The Lord Jesus himself declared all foods were clean.

However, all this was not the point Paul was driving at. His point was that no matter what opinion people had we should love one another. Don't judge others over non-essential issues. Whether we eat meat or abstain from meat we still accept people.

Paul said to his own master he stood or fell. This was an idea which is overlooked but I would like to underline this. Each Christian has the same Master. Each person stands before the Lord themselves. If a brother in Christ is convinced it is OK to eat steak or pork then don't judge him. Instead, make sure you are right with God. Whatever opinion we have on this we should be convinced before the Lord. Do not oppress other people with your opinion on non-essentials.

There are certain things Christians agree on which are essential facts of the gospel. Outside these essentials we give people freedom to follow the Lord. Each person has his own relationship with his Master. The Lord deals with each one of us as individuals. The Lord knows where each person is at in their understanding.

Why did Paul have to teach these subjects? Obviously there was disagreement in the church. However, Paul underlined the importance of keeping these topics in perspective. One thing the Lord Jesus condemned the religious leaders about was that they strained a gnat but swallowed camels. This meant they focused on non-essential elements of faith while neglecting important matters.

Paul tried to steer the church to major on major issues and to not oppress others with opinions. What we eat or don't eat, what we drink or don't drink: these are opinions of our own conscience and experience.

What is important is that we love people and do not cause the weaker brother to be offended by the freedoms we believe we have.

14:5-6

Paul continued to underline the fact that there will be differences of opinion among God's people over non-essential issues. These non-essential issues include observance of certain days or whether a Christian should eat non-kosher foods. I believe Paul did not hesitate to eat any food. I don't think he was keen on observing special days. To Paul the Lord Jesus was the Sabbath Day. Jesus himself is our rest. Jesus fulfilled all the types from the Old Testament. There was no reason to cling to shadows when you have the fullness of Christ.

However, Paul realized every believer is at different stages in spiritual growth. It is better not to get people focused on non-essentials. He exhorted us to love one another, accept one another, and overlook opinions a brother may have on non-essential issues.

14:7-9

Isolation is not an option for a Christian. Some are more comfortable in isolation. I knew a man once who loved God and knew his Bible but did not like people. He did not go to church. Over the years I observed how he became strange, disconnected, and aloof. Eventually he stopped returning phone calls or hand-written letters I sent him.

None of us lives to himself. It is work to deal with people. Not all people have an answer. Most problems can only be solved by the person turning to God and putting their faith in the Lord Jesus. Even Christians suffer terribly with personal, family, or financial problems.

This life is short. We should live for the Lord in community with believers. We should not isolate. Even if our natural inclination is isolation we need to work at being with people. The church needs each one working together to function correctly.

We do not live to ourselves and we do not die to ourselves. If we live we live for the Lord. And when we die we are the Lord's. God has complete ownership of our life and he knows the day we will die. Read Psalm 90:12.

14:10-13

Why do we judge our brother? This is a good question. Why? Why do we look at others with a critical eye? Why do we examine the words, actions, and attitudes of other people so closely? What drives us to do this?

Each will answer this at the judgment seat of Christ. Christians are not exempt from giving an answer to the Lord for what they did while in the body. Our salvation is secure. This does not mean we will not be required to explain ourselves. We should fear God and not judge others. We should not be a stumbling block. What is worse than judging someone? Becoming a stumbling block.

How often do we take the time to examine ourselves? Do we know if we are a stumbling block to someone?

We should be serious minded. We should fear God when we are tempted to speak evil or judge someone. Are we sure we are smart enough to judge people?

I pray the Lord will help me. I feel convicted when I remember how often I judged people. I am certain the motive behind judging others is because of pride. May the Lord help me humble myself. Help me to not be a stumbling block. Help me think before I speak and bring every thought into captivity and obedience to Christ.

14:14-23

I've heard pastors boast that they eat steak. When I hear this it makes me cringe. I cringe because I remember these verses where Paul said if we have faith about food to keep it to ourselves. We can condemn ourselves by being uncharitable to weaker Christians.

I've seen Christians boast about how they drink alcohol. Their conscience is clear but they are in danger of stumbling a weaker Christian. What about the brother who may struggle with alcohol or addiction? People who boast about their freedom violate the spirit of what Paul taught in Romans 14.

The whole point is for us to build up others. We don't do this by boasting of freedom to eat and drink. Paul said he was convinced that no food or drink was sinful. However, we should not hurt others by exercising our freedom if by doing so we cause other people to sin.

Though I am convinced that food and drink is not sinful I would rather live like someone who is weak so that I do not offend those who are weak. I would rather abstain so that I don't offend people. There are people in the church who are weak in matters of eating and drinking. This is not just a problem in the first century church. There is a serious problem in the church with people overcome by addictions.

For a long time I judged Christian who had the freedom to drink a glass of wine. I no longer judge those Christians. I don't believe they are in sin. But I think they should be careful that someone does not see them exercising their freedom and stumble the weaker brother.

There is too much alcoholism and addiction in society for me to indulge in drinking and have a clear conscience. I want to live in a such a way that even the weakest Christian will not be offended by how I live.

The Weak and the Strong – Chapter 15

15:1-3

We should define the weak and the strong. In context we know the strong are those who are convinced that all foods are clean. Jesus taught his twelve disciples that all foods were clean. This lesson was repeated so the disciples would learn the rules on clean and unclean foods no longer applied to the church. People in the church do not get circumcised to prove they are Christians. Jewish dietary laws no longer apply to Christians. The weak person thinks these rules still apply to us and are afraid to eat unclean food.

Paul taught the "strong" Christian that his job was to bear the infirmities of his weak brother. Don't do this with a smug attitude. The motive in bearing with the weaker brother was to help him for his good. Our goal is to please others. This is the example the Lord Jesus set for us. Our goal is to please the Lord by bearing the infirmities of the weak. The Christian takes the low place of serving, bearing with others, and putting one's self last. We may have knowledge but it doesn't matter what we know if it causes our brother to stumble. We bear the infirmities of the weak for the purpose of building them up and being an example of humility.

The kingdom of God is not about eating and drinking but it is about living for the Lord with a pure heart and in humility toward others.

15:4

Paul taught us one reason why God gave the Bible. The Lord provided the Bible for our learning so that we through patience and the comfort of the scripture might have hope. The Lord provided us with a Bible so we could have hope. Where would I be today without the hope which God's word gives to me? All the things which God had men write down in the Bible were recorded so God's people would have hope. He is the God of hope. He causes us to hope in Him.

There is hope all through the Bible, from the beginning when Adam and Eve fell in the Garden. God gave them hope by promising a Seed would crush the head of the serpent. He gave us hope by the promises he made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He gave us hope by revealing himself to Moses as the great I Am That I Am.

He reveals himself to us through the Bible as our provider, our protector, and as our portion. The Lord is our inheritance.

I have hope today because my life is in God's hands. He knows the plans he has for me. His plans are for good and not for evil. He gives me a future and a hope. He is the God who holds my hand. He works out everything for my good and his glory. All things work together for the good of those who love him and who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28). He will carry on to completion the good work which he started in me. (Philippians 1:6). He is the Potter and I am the clay. He will be faithful to complete what he started in me so long ago.

15:5-7

Paul circled back again to his teaching on unity and accepting others in the church. We are not to focus on non-essential things which divide people, but instead focus on the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ which unites us all. The gospel is outlined in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. Jesus died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day.

We are to unite together with people who confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, that he died for our sins, that he was buried, and he rose again the third day. This matters within the context of the facts that Jesus was fully man and fully God. Jesus is God, and he is also a man. He is the God-Man. This is the context of the gospel that he died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again.

Keeping our focus on this makes Christians like minded. Keeping our minds on the gospel will unite us together so that with one mind and one mouth we glorify God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We should receive one another as Christ received us. How did Christ receive us? He died for us when we were yet sinners. He loved us when we did not know him or even care about him. God demonstrated his own love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

15:8-12

Paul used the Bible to prove that Jew and Gentile are united by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This was a revelation given to Paul about the church. We see this in Ephesians 3:3-6. Paul said it was a mystery to the prophets in the Old Testament but it was revealed by Paul and other apostles that Jews and Gentiles both would form the church. God united Jew and Gentile through his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. In the church there is no longer Jew or Gentile but we are all one in Christ Jesus. Read Colossians 3:11.

The underlying principle is that our identity is in the Lord Jesus. All other facets of who we are come second. Primarily we are in Christ. We are Christians. Our skin color, background, culture, or language is secondary and pales in comparison to this great one fact: we are in Christ. This makes everything else about who we are insignificant.

The Lord will have men and women from every nation, tribe and tongue in heaven. People from all over the world make up the household of faith and will be united together in eternal praise to the heavenly Father.

15:13

God is the God of hope. The Lord is the Lord of hope. This is what we need to grab today and every day. The Lord is not against us. He wants us to lay down our weapons, put up our hands, and surrender. We cannot win against the law of sin and death at work in our body. He can help us, though, if we will turn from our self and put our trust in his son Jesus Christ.

There is joy and peace when we believe in the Lord Jesus. This joy and peace is not dependent on circumstances. I remember reading the testimony of Richard Wurmbrand and how when he was a prisoner in a Communist prison that he found joy and peace in believing the Lord Jesus. He experienced the presence of God in the darkest circumstances. Others have said the same thing. There is true joy and peace in believing the Lord Jesus, and this joy unspeakable and this peace which passes all understanding does not depend upon what is happening around us.

The joy of the Lord is our strength. We can abound in hope because we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. We have the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome every situation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord gives us his peace, his joy, and his hope. He is the God of hope. He does not disappoint us. He said he will never leave us and he will never forsake us. All of his promises to us are yes and amen in Christ Jesus.

15:14-22

I see in these verses the need for men who are gifts in the church and also for those who are in the church to function correctly in relationship to one another.

What I mean is that there is a real distinction between the church and God's gifts to the church. These gifts are men which Paul listed as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. However, even if a man is not in this list, he is still called upon to admonish his brother in Christ. Paul said they were "able also to admonish one another". Yet, even though Christians can encourage, edify, and admonish one another there is still a need for men who are the Lord's gift to the church. There is a need for apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

Paul said he fully preached the gospel of Christ. Paul defined for us the parameters of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. Jesus died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day.

Sadly, I have been to churches for a long time and never heard the Pastor mention that Christ died for our sins, that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day. Not one time. This is an indication to me that we are living in a time of apostasy in the church in America.

Paul fully preached the gospel. *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."* (Romans 1:16)

15:23-33

These passages where Paul outlined his travel plans give us insight into his missionary journeys. Many have undertaken to map out exactly the routes Paul traveled in his work. Here we can tell that Paul had not yet traveled to Rome but it was his goal. He asked the Christians in Rome to pray that he would get there. He believed it was God's will for him to travel to Rome to preach the gospel there.

When we read the account in the book of Acts we know Paul did make it to Rome, but perhaps not as he thought he would. He got there as a prisoner aboard a slave ship.

We don't know how the Lord will get us where we need to be in life. We can trust God will use our lives to glorify his son Jesus Christ. All we need to do is surrender our lives to the Lord, and trust in him to bring it to pass. He will guide and direct us. God is over all. He is able to move in our lives, in our circumstances, and also in the hearts of people around us.

Conclusion – Chapter 16

In this final chapter we have Paul's greetings to members of churches. He ends this letter like he began it. With the gospel of Jesus Christ and with God's grace. Hopefully we have learned to do the same in our lives. Remember to keep the gospel of Jesus Christ in your heart and in your mind so that when we have opportunity we will share this good news to all who will listen. It is the gospel which is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes.